

The  
**Teacher Trainer**

A PRACTICAL JOURNAL FOR THOSE WHO TRAIN, MENTOR AND EDUCATE TESOL TEACHERS

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Includes regular series:

Interviews, The Russell Stannard Column, Current Research, Trainer Background, Trainee Voices, Article Watch and Publications Received.

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# Editorial

Welcome to the last issue of our thirtieth birthday volume.

The issue is available as usual in this print edition and also by subscribing online at: [www.tttjournal.co.uk](http://www.tttjournal.co.uk). Also online is a free selection of back articles and some extras in TTTJ Plus!

As usual in this issue we introduce new young writers as well as sharing space with those who are well-established in our field. The issue draws on work done by teacher trainers and educators from or working in Palestine, the UK, China, Brazil, the USA, Canada, Italy and South Korea. The pages are packed, as ever, with the practical and the thoughtful.

The questions which are explored in this issue are these:

- How can a teacher trainer training programme be adapted to suit the specific context in which it is delivered? (Page 2)
- What is the British Council Professional Award in Teacher Development? (Page 6)
- How can we use Google Forms to create surveys and questionnaires and gather data quickly? (Page 7)
- Can a mindfulness-based reflective framework promote more self-aware ELT? (Page 9)
- How can working on pronunciation improve listening skills in a foreign language? (Page 15)
- What's a low stress way of giving your first conference presentation? (Page 17)
- How can individual teachers integrate work on gender neutral language into their language classes? (Page 18)
- What are 'neuromyths' and do you believe them? (Page 22)
- How can we encourage teachers to develop their own materials for writing classes? (Page 24)
- And finally, have there been any interesting articles or books published recently that might make useful reading for us teacher trainers, teacher educators and mentors? (Pages 26 and 27)

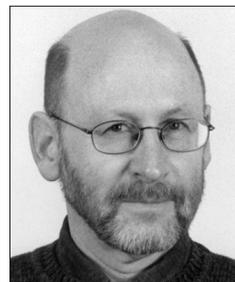
I hope you enjoy reading the answers!

All good wishes

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## About "The Teacher Trainer"

The Teacher Trainer is a practical journal for those involved in modern language, especially TESOL, teacher training. Whether you are a teacher who tends to be asked questions by others in the staff room, or a Director of studies with an office of your own, whether you are a mentor or a course tutor on an exam course, an inspector going out to schools or a teacher educator at a university, this journal is for you. Our aim is to provide a forum for ideas, information and news, to put fellow professionals in touch with each other and to give all those involved in training, mentoring and educating teachers a feeling of how trainers in other fields operate, as well as building up a pool of experience within our own field.

The journal comes out three times a year and makes use of a variety of formats e.g. articles, letters, comments, quotations, interviews, cartoons, spoofs. If the idea is good and useful to trainers, we'll print it no matter what voice you choose to express it in.

# Context specific teacher training

By Salam Affouneh and Nick Bilbrough

## Introduction

The British Council's CiSELT (Certificate in Secondary English Language Teaching) is a large-scale, global in-service teacher training programme. It was developed to be used in many diverse contexts by local teacher trainers. To date it has been delivered in many countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America. It is quite adaptable in its approach to building teacher skills and knowledge. Not all of the modules are compulsory and there is so much material available in each unit that local teacher trainers can often pick and choose the parts which they feel are most relevant and applicable to their context. At the same time, it covers components of the teaching of language systems and skills which are widely considered to be universal. These include *Teaching vocabulary*, *Dealing with errors and mistakes*, and *Teaching writing* for example.

The British Council has also designed and implemented a number of CiSELT trainer-training programmes for teacher trainers. Three of these took place in several locations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for different groups of teacher trainers in the summer of 2015. Each group had around 30 participants.

## Planning for impact

In order for teacher training and trainer training programmes such as these to have both immediate and long lasting impact they need to be clearly situated in the context in which they are delivered. It is of course advisable that the JIJOE (Jet-in Jet-out expert) paradigm is avoided (Alderson and Scott 1992). This is where specialists from outside are flown in to offer advice about classroom practice, despite having minimal knowledge about the local teaching and teacher training context, the beliefs of learners, teachers and supervisors, or the wash back effect from the examination system in place.

Though teachers may pay lip service to what is introduced by such trainers in the short-term, JIJOE centered approaches may ultimately lead to what Holliday (1992) has referred to as 'tissue rejection'.

'Despite advances in curriculum design procedures, there is often failure within ELT projects to produce innovation which is in the long term meaningful and acceptable to the host institution. In other words, 'tissue rejection' takes place: the innovation is sooner or later rejected because it does not fit.'

## Our course

The CiSELT trainer training programme in 2015 was conducted by Salam Affouneh, a Palestinian trainer and Nick Bilbrough a British trainer. We aimed to develop a framework within which the teacher training course could be personalised by the local trainers. We both felt it was important that the Palestinian teacher trainers we were working with, and who would be delivering the CiSELT course later on to teachers, stayed true to the core components of the course but, at the same time, were empowered to adapt it where possible to the local context, thereby simultaneously emphasizing to their own participants the importance of context specific teaching.

## Reflection on beliefs within the course

When we scratch beneath the surface, there may be many different beliefs about how languages are learnt held by teachers, teacher trainers and trainer trainers. These beliefs may be based on previous experiences as a language learner or language teacher, from observing other teachers, or from participating in previous teacher training programmes. There may also be differences between beliefs which are stated openly and those which are kept private, for fear of appearing old-fashioned, or subversive.

We incorporated a discussion about beliefs early on in the trainer training programme for CiSELT for three reasons. Firstly, because we feel that reflecting on beliefs, articulating them and sharing them is a useful activity at all stages of trainer development, particularly since it can help to shape practice. Secondly this discussion was also a useful diagnostic tool for us as trainers of trainers. Thirdly, we were cautious about imposing a belief system on the trainers in training since their inner beliefs were likely to be at least partly a product of their teaching and learning context, which of course they were much more familiar with than we were.

On the first day of the course we distributed the handout below and asked the participants individually to pick 2-5 beliefs that they felt that they held particularly strongly. They then shared what they had highlighted as a larger group and, by mingling, tried to find 3 or 4 other people who had similar beliefs to their own. These then became the groups that they worked in for the planning of micro-training sessions for the whole course. We could, of course, have asked participants to work in 'mixed belief' groups in the interests of encouraging more debate, but this may have conflicted with group harmony and cooperation and, for teacher trainers with less experience, of which there were many, it may have resulted in too much compromising and too much time spent planning, leaving less time for implementation.

## The handout

*Below are some beliefs about teaching and learning English in secondary schools in Palestine. Which ones do you hold strongly?*

- 1) *Teacher talk should be kept to a minimum in the language classroom.*
- 2) *Memorisation is very important in learning a foreign language.*
- 3) *It's very important that the language learners do lots of pair and group work.*
- 4) *A big problem is that the language learners don't hear English much outside of class. I need to make sure they hear it a lot in class.*
- 5) *It's very important to motivate the language learners. Without motivation they won't learn very much.*
- 6) *I want them to practice speaking as much as they can in class.*
- 7) *Most of the learning of English happens outside of class.*
- 8) *If I can get the students to read for pleasure in English, their English will improve a lot.*
- 9) *Discipline is a very big problem in schools here.*
- 10) *Children can learn a lot when I explain grammar and vocabulary on the board.*
- 11) *People learn the most when they are having fun. Games are very useful.*
- 12) *Learning a language is hard work. No pain – no gain.*
- 13) *Writing is what learners are going to be tested on mainly so we need to prioritise this in language classes.*
- 14) *Lots of learning can happen in the interaction between the language teacher and the learners.*
- 15) *People learn best when they discover things for themselves.*

## Key features of a context specific teacher training course

Trainer beliefs are important since to some extent they inform practice, but we also wanted to explore more practical issues related to context specificity on the trainer training course in Palestine. Again on the first day, we arrived at a list of key features of context specific teaching, and then discussed with participants to what extent they felt these features might also be applied to teacher training. The features were as follows; *Personalisation, Structure, Flexibility, Listening, Scaffolding, Challenge, Practice, Communication, Reflection, and Autonomy.*

Each of the features was displayed as an image on a powerpoint presentation and we discussed what participants thought it represented and how it might relate to teaching and to training.

The features will be explained below with reference to language teaching and language teacher training. We also tried to apply them in our own work as trainer trainers.

### Personalisation

Competent language teachers are able to bring to life the language areas from the course book, so that the language learners can connect them to their own lives and context. It is widely believed that this can be a powerful catalyst for language ownership. In the same way teacher trainers need to be continually looking for ways to connect the activities and ideas explored in training workshops to the classroom context of the trainee teachers. This may actually involve relating issues back to their coursebook, *English for Palestine* (Macmillan) as opposed to away from them, as is often the case in language teaching.

### Structure

There are many instructional sequences or frameworks available to language teachers for organizing classes (one very common example is the Presentation, Practice, Production or PPP approach). Though these sequences do not need to be adhered to rigidly, having them as a point of reference for a language lesson, may provide a strong sense of security and progression for both teachers and learners. Instructional sequences may be similarly helpful for teacher training sessions. Trainee teachers need to feel that there is a common rhythm for each session, and that content is both connected to previous work and also builds on it.

### Flexibility

Experienced language teachers know that though frameworks are useful, we should teach the students not the lesson plan. It's also important to be open enough to deal with questions and problems around language which arise spontaneously in class. We would argue that this openness and flexibility is even more important when working as a trainer with practising teachers. Although individual language learners can sometimes hijack a class by diverting the teacher's attention towards an issue which is less relevant for the other learners, in a teacher training session where teachers all work in very similar contexts, this is, in our view, less likely to happen and the problems raised are likely to be more universal. Thus everyone may benefit from the discussion that follows.

### Listening

One of the most important skills for language teachers to acquire is listening. Flexible teachers are constantly noticing how well the language learners are coping with the material, and also listening to how they are using language to express themselves. In a teacher-training context, listening to what is going on between the people in the room, allows teacher trainers to reflect in action and make informed choices about how to proceed with a session. We too of course tried to listen closely to our trainers in training.



### Scaffolding

Deep learning in language classrooms often occurs in the interaction which happens between learner and teacher. When teachers and learners engage in dialogue where both parties are genuinely listening, teachers are able to use clarification checks to make meanings clearer. They can also gently reformulate and recast learner utterances, enabling the learner to operate at a higher level than is possible among peers. Similarly, lots of important conversations occur in plenary discussions between trainee teachers and the trainer. Trainers need to be good at slowing down the experience of these conversations sometimes, so that issues are not lost, and are given the weight they deserve. In this way everyone can notice and benefit from them.

### Challenge

Connected very closely with scaffolding is the idea of challenge. Little is achieved in language classrooms where learners are simply going through the motions, and practicing what they can already do. The same principle applies to training. Trainee teachers need to be encouraged, even pushed, to experiment with new ways of working and to think in new ways. Trainer to trainee questioning strategies play an important role in making this happen and trainers should be able to gauge when they can push the trainees to go deeper by asking more probing questions.

### Practice

It's hard to learn a language by just talking about how the language works. In the same way it's hard to learn to teach by just talking about how teaching works. It's important that training sessions include practical activities that would be achievable in the teaching context of the trainee teachers. There are various ways to conduct these activities. Firstly they could be model lessons with the trainer in role as trainer and the trainees in role as students; for example the trainer could demonstrate how to elicit language with a picture. Secondly, the classroom activity to be demonstrated is used to explore trainee material; so for instance different aspects of the value of drama in language teaching (scripts, roleplay, mime, improvisation, pronunciation etc) could be brainstormed using the Buzz Groups idea where each group of trainees discusses a different aspect, before sharing ideas in plenary. Thirdly, the activity to be demonstrated uses content which is about the activity itself, as in loop input (Woodward 1986); for example a text is dictated to trainees and the topic of the text is about the pros and cons of doing dictations in language teaching.

See Woodward (2004) for an explanation of Buzz groups and scores of other ideas for working with teachers in training.

continued >>>

## Communication

The idea that communication should be emphasized in language classrooms has been a common message of many teacher training programmes over the past 30 years. If language is used communicatively it means that it is used to solve a problem, to express an idea, or to establish a relationship between people. In a teacher training and trainer training context, communication also plays a part in making what happens between the people in the room more meaningful. For example, in the aforementioned buzz groups activity, if each group discusses a different area of the topic, when they come to feed back to each other in plenary there is more of a genuine reason to listen than if they had all discussed the same area. By the same token, if the trainer asks a referential question (i.e. one where the trainer herself doesn't know the answer), such as 'How might you adapt this activity in your own classes?' the trainees listen in a different (more communicative) way than they do to a display question such as, 'So what is the difference between a display question and a referential question?'

## Reflection

Practice and communication are useful components of a programme of language study, but without accompanying these stages with opportunities to reflect, either internally or through discussion, there is a danger that no real progress is made and language isn't sufficiently internalized. Similarly, if a teacher training course consists entirely of practical activity after activity without moments for reflecting on the purpose and organisation of these activities, it may be difficult for trainee teachers to see how they can relate such activities to their own classes. It is important to include reflection stages after each activity, or to allow time at the end of each session to enable teachers to clarify what they have learnt, and what they might be taking away.

## Autonomy

With limited classroom time available to most learners, it is generally unrealistic to expect that the teacher will teach all of the language that needs to be learnt, or to provide all of the necessary opportunities for appropriate practice. Good language learners develop their own strategies for improving, by sourcing their own input and by creating their own opportunities for language activation. Of course this does not mean that the teacher's role is redundant. He or she plays an important role in developing these skills in learners, and in priming them to notice (Schmidt and Frota 1986) the features of the language that they encounter and use when they are not in class.

This same principle, and the link between the classroom and the outside world applies equally well to teacher training. A training course needs to be able to raise awareness among teachers about appropriate books, blogs, and conferences etc, which can contribute to the continuing professional development of the teacher. Perhaps more importantly, it needs to be able to train teachers in the skill of noticing what is happening in their own classes, to reflect on these events, and to learn from them as much as possible.

## A Framework for teacher training sessions

The features mentioned above may all be important components to consider when designing a teacher training programme as a whole, but it would be rather unwieldy, to say the least, to be strict about including every one of them into each individual training workshop or seminar. From the discussion that developed with the trainers in training around the relative importance of these features, we decided to condense the components into a framework that they could follow loosely when preparing their own micro training sessions on the trainer training course. From this emerged the PEP framework.

### Stage 1

**Practice** – The trainer sets up a language classroom activity with trainee teachers. This could be done via a model lesson where the trainees are in role as language learners, or by other means e.g. via loop input. (Woodward 2001).

### Stage 2

**Evaluation** – The trainer discusses with trainees the benefits and problems there may be with doing this activity in language classrooms in the particular context where the trainee teachers work. Typical trainer to trainee questions here could include; *What is the purpose of this activity? What are some possible benefits/problems with doing the activity in your classes? Which areas of language does the activity activate? How might you adapt this activity for low level learners/for a very large class/for younger learners? Which units of your course book could this activity work with?*

### Stage 3

**Personalisation** – Teacher trainees try out the activity either by setting it up with peers or by creating their own example based on the real needs of their own language students. Instructions for a typical trainee groupwork activity at this stage might be the following;

*In groups, go through the course books that you use. Find places where this activity could be useful. Create your own version of this activity to practise a particular area of language or for a particular class that you teach. Plan how to present your activity to learners so that they will understand what to do. Try out your activity on the other trainees by micro-teaching it.*

The PEP framework was initially presented purely as an organizing principle around which teacher trainers could plan micro-training sessions for their fellow participants. It then also evolved to become part of the criteria by which their micro teacher training sessions, and later their real-life teacher training sessions, were formatively assessed. Like all good frameworks for language classes, such as OHE (Lewis 1993) or ARC (Scrivener 1994), PEP does not necessarily have to be followed in the particular order outlined here. Neither is it necessary that each stage is given equal time and emphasis. In fact, it could well be that one stage is omitted completely from one training session, is given as homework, or is emphasized more in future sessions. We do feel however that it is important that none of the stages are overlooked completely if a teacher-training programme intends to be truly context specific.

## Formative assessment of context specific teacher training

The strategies that we have mentioned so far have been focussed on encouraging the trainers in training to design and execute context specific training sessions. However we also put a lot of emphasis on reflection after each micro-training session and spent a considerable amount of time facilitating feedback sessions on the participants' work. We felt that it was important that the way in which this feedback was delivered also emerged from the context.

As with feedback on teaching given to language teachers, feedback on teacher training sessions, can be very beneficial to the teacher trainer and ultimately to the teachers they are training. The fact that an observer is not directly responsible for classroom management issues, and is not immersed in the context in the same way as the teacher trainer, allows them to notice things that otherwise may be overlooked. This advantage is also a disadvantage however. Only the teacher trainer truly knows the stage in the journey that the trainees are at; he or she knows what has gone before and what is to follow, as well as the competencies and personalities of the teachers. Even less visible to an outsider is the developmental journey of the teacher trainer. To what extent is he or she taking risks by experimenting with something new, versus playing it safe using tried and tested routines?

So in order to make the assessment process more context specific, the impartiality of the observer needs to be balanced with the insider knowledge of the teacher trainer leading the course. Feedback will tend to be more useful and more accessible if it is delivered using assessment criteria developed by the people being observed.

On the trainer training programme in Palestine we tried to achieve this by asking the trainers in training to design the criteria by which their micro-training would be observed and evaluated by us. The following set of criteria was collated through eliciting suggestions from the participants, though the idea to break this down into organisational aspects, pedagogical aspects and relational aspects came from us. These criteria were used by us trainer trainers and by the trainers in training themselves to evaluate their micro-training experience. It was also used later when the trainers in training, working with real teacher trainees, were observed after the course had finished. Salam observed a few sessions in the West bank face to face but neither of us can travel to Gaza so most of the observations were done by the trainers each sending us a video of one of their sessions. They had watched the full video themselves and picked out key moments that they wanted to discuss. Then either Salam or I watched the video and we had a Skype or Facebook video call conversation to discuss it.

## Criteria developed for evaluating a training session

### Organisational aspects

Is the trainer well prepared and organised? Are the objectives of the training session clear? Are the materials appropriately engaging and contextualized?

Is the session well balanced in terms of trainer input versus teacher trainee discussion?

### Pedagogical aspects

Does the trainer have effective presentation skills? Are the instructions clear? Is there an appropriate balance between different interaction patterns? Does the session promote deep thinking and/or thinking outside the box? Is it sufficiently challenging? Is it sufficiently practical? Is it well paced? Is feedback used effectively?

### Relational aspects

How does the trainer develop rapport with the teacher trainees? Does the trainer show a positive attitude towards the training and the trainees? How does the trainer maintain the trainees' motivation and interest? Does the trainer really listen to the trainees?

## Conclusions

Our long-term goal with this project was that the training delivered by teacher trainers in Palestine, despite using an imported product, would, as far as possible, be specific to the context in which it took place. There is of course a certain irony in that, as trainer trainers not working permanently in that context, we were in a position to pass judgement on whether this was the case or not! Suffice to say at this early stage, that it is reassuring that from our observations (either face to face in Salam's case, or through recorded video in my case), we have both seen many successful training sessions which have incorporated both the PEP model, and the longer list of features of context specific teacher training outlined earlier. We have also seen that the criteria for assessing a training session is a both a useful checklist for trainers when planning a session, as well as a tool for formative assessment used by observers.

Even more reassuring is the fact that local trainers have, to some extent, subverted the PEP framework by experimenting with merging two stages together or rearranging the order. Two creative and highly effective models of this can be seen here [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvGe1gTaVDs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvGe1gTaVDs) Another interesting initiative that was introduced by Shireen Irziqat, an UNRWA supervisor in Hebron and one of the participants on the trainer training course, was to begin each training session with a five minute pair work activity where trainee teachers discussed and evaluated something new that they had tried out in their classes.

As with frameworks for teaching, such as PPP, there is a danger that the PEP model for teacher training makes each training workshop a one off event, rather than part of an ongoing process. Shireen's strategy, in contrast, means that sessions are firmly linked to each other and personalisation is brought to the forefront. In our opinion, this is a very good starting point for context specific teacher training.

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resource books in the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers series; *Dialogue Activities* (2007) and *Memory Activities for Language Learning* (2011) and more recently *Stories Alive* (2016), a book written specifically for the Palestinian context, and published by the British Council. He is now devoting all his energy to <https://handsupproject.org>, telling stories and teaching language online for young learners in refugee camps. Email: [info@handsupproject.org](mailto:info@handsupproject.org)

Photo of trainer training on page 3 courtesy of Ahed Iziman



# Interview

I recently became aware of the British Council Professional Award for Teacher Development and was happy to interview Maggie Milne, Teacher Development Advisor at the British Council.

**TW:** Maggie can you say a little about your role with the BC?

**MM:** I provide quality assurance and consultancy on professional development for teachers and teacher educators around the world.

**TW:** Can you tell me a bit about the new BC Professional Award in TD?

**MM:** The Award defines professional standards for measuring and validating expertise in teacher development. The whole purpose of the qualification is to enable BC overseas offices to develop and accredit local trainers who will be able to deliver quality teacher development on behalf of the British Council and its partners. So, for example, it has been used in India to ensure that locally appointed teacher educators can deliver training on large scale British Council projects to specific quality standards.

**TW:** How do you choose the participants?

**MM:** No previous teacher training experience is necessary for acceptance onto Award programmes. In practice it tends to be a mix of teachers interested in moving into teacher development and experienced teacher educators wanting to update and formally assess their skills. We do though have eligibility criteria which prospective participants have to meet – there's a fairly rigorous application process.

**TW:** What do they learn?

**MM:** There are three units in the Award. Each unit is linked to workshops in our Trainer Development Course – this provides the content for the Award. In Unit 1, participants identify what skills are transferrable from their teaching experience to teacher development. There is also a strong focus on inclusion and participants explore learner differences and motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic. In Unit 2, they develop skills in assessing and adapting training activities, giving instructions effectively and providing constructive feedback. An important element of this unit is micro-training where participants plan, deliver and provide peer feedback on teacher development activities. In the final unit participants design and deliver a 50-minute workshop for teachers.

I should also at this point probably mention the trainer-assessors. They deliver the training part of the Award programme in conjunction with conducting assessment. They are selected according to their abilities and previous training experience. They are given full training in this role and are formally observed by the quality assurer.

**TW:** How are they assessed?

**MM:** Assessment is practice-oriented, centred on the ability to apply learning to 'real-world' teacher development contexts. Formative and summative assessment tasks are integrated into the training programme. There are three assessment types:

**Group tasks:** This is where participants work co-operatively to achieve learning outcomes. It involves assessors observing individual contributions and overall group performance – focusing on both the process of group work as well as task completion.

**Individual assignments:** These tasks are carried out in participants' own time. They provide a framework for participants to demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply concepts, information and ideas from the programme.

**Reflection tasks:** These encourage participants to think about, evaluate and review their learning experiences. The aim is to support development of knowledge and skills. Reflections are used as a basis for discussion at feedback meetings.

**TW:** What made you come up with the idea?

**MM:** It was through delivering the Trainer Development Course. At the end of a course, participants were given attendance certificates, but they suggested they would like something which truly reflected their achievements. This led to the concept of an Award for teacher educators.

**TW:** When did it start? How many people have done it so far?

**MM:** The Trainer Development Course began several years ago and has been reviewed three times – the most recently was last year. As I mentioned the course provided the content for the training part of the Award. We first piloted the Award – integrated training and assessment – in Havana in November 2013 with 24 participants. Since then, it has been delivered twice more in Havana, and in Sri Lanka – with participants from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. It has also been delivered twice in India. The maximum number per programme is 24 participants – but with three trainer-assessors as we feel for an intensive programme like this one a realistic ration is 8 participants per trainer assessor. The latest delivery took place in Pakistan in May 2016.

**TW:** Have you had any feedback from participants?

**MM:** Yes we have had very positive feedback from them. They are very enthusiastic about the integrated training content and assessment tasks. Many of the participants have commented on the benefits of the assessment approach as something which enables learning. An example of the kind of feedback we have received:

"We don't have opportunities to talk with colleagues at work. Group assessment gave us a platform to share ideas and experiences."

"I liked the fact that a lot of the individual assignment relates to our experience and I could connect it with what we do. It relates to our own practice."

"The idea of being assessed, linked to a task made it more focused, the criteria and self-regulation helped group work lead to something as opposed to discussion for the sake of it."

Feedback on reflection was unanimously enthusiastic across all programmes – something which both surprised and pleased me. These comments are typical:

"I found the reflections really useful. We normally don't reflect in this way. Really helped me to consolidate."

"I'm definitely going to go back home and go through all the reflections again to see if I can reflect on the reflections."

"Those were the actual take-aways. Truly I have built my portfolio – building my portfolio more reflectively. I've been preaching about it – this was an opportunity to practice."

**TW:** Any changes you want to make for the future?

**MM:** There's always room for improvement! I would like to develop a bigger range of assessment tasks and perhaps look at the option of doing some bits online. However, the main thing at the moment is developing more trainer-assessors and quality assurers.

**TW:** Where can people go for more information on the Trainer Development course?



**MM:** They can contact me by email at: [Maggie.milne@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Maggie.milne@britishcouncil.org)

**TW:** And how about if they are interested in the Professional Award itself?

**MM:** The same way!

**TW:** Thanks, Maggie.



# The Russell Stannard Column

## This will definitely make your life easier! Using Google Forms to gather data by creating surveys and questionnaires quickly

By Russell Stannard, UK

### Introduction

'Google Forms' is now one of the tools I make most use of in my own work as a teacher trainer, whether delivering face to face or on-line courses. It always causes a reaction when I introduce it into my training or talks and demonstrate what it can do. I have realized that many people don't understand what Google Forms can do or just how versatile it is. If you are a teacher trainer or involved in any sort of activity when you need to gather data, then you will find this article really useful. It is just as relevant to classroom teachers too. Let's start by clarifying exactly what Google Forms is and can do.

### What are Google Forms?

Google Forms, a free, downloadable app, allows you to quickly create questionnaires and surveys on-line. It is very easy to use, allows for a range of questions types and can include pictures, video and other media. Once you have keyed in a survey, a link is generated which you can share quickly and easily with your users. The users click on the link and are immediately taken to the questionnaire or survey to complete. However, it is after your users have completed your questionnaires that the fun really starts. Google automatically collates all the data and creates graphs and tables to present it. You don't need to do anything!! It produces the information in a digestible format that you can print out, use for reports etc without needing to do any additional work yourself.

### Why do I like this app so much?

The most obvious reason is because it is free. However, what I really like is just how easy Google Forms makes it to create questions, re-order them, duplicate them, edit them and share them. I have not found an easier tool or one that does the job as quickly. It is a very versatile tool and has some additional features that mean you can use it in ways that go way beyond just gathering data.

### How do I use it?

Let's look at a few scenarios where I have used Google Forms.

#### Scenario 1

In 2015, I had a training session with a group of French teachers at NILE in Manchester, UK. The course I was going to run was about blended learning. I needed to find out what the teachers knew and so at what level to pitch the course. I created a questionnaire that included lots of questions about the participants' use of technology, what they were struggling with and what they wanted to learn. I sent it to the organiser of the course, who then shared it, via Google forms, with the teachers who were going to attend. A week later, I opened up the document, clicked on 'Summary of responses' and all the information I needed was laid out before my eyes in graphs and tables. I used the information to plan my course.

#### Scenario 2

I recently ran an on-line training course in Edmodo on- with a group of just 12 teachers. I didn't meet them at any point, so I wasn't able to gather feedback from the participants in class. Instead I simply created a questionnaire on-line using Google Forms and then emailed it to all 12 participants. The questionnaire had a range of question types, some were data driven, some yes/no, some involved ranking, some were multiple choice and others gave space for the teachers to write answers and provide more detailed feedback. Google Forms can generate a range of question types and the data from them all is presented all nicely displayed for easy reading and analysis. All I had to do was go to the Google Form later and click on 'Summary of responses' to see the feedback.

#### Scenario 3

I was thinking of running a training session in using Blogger but I needed to judge if there was enough interest to do so. I created a very simple questionnaire that only asked teachers to add their name and email address if they were interested in a course in Blogger. I then shared the Google Forms link on my website and left it there for a couple of weeks. I then went back to the Google Form and could see how many people had signed up to show interest in the course. Of course I was able to use all the email addresses I had collected too to send out more information about the now apparently viable course.

#### Scenario 4

In the summer of 2015, I did some experiments with the Flipped Classroom. I used Google Forms as a way of checking that my language students had actually watched a video at home and then completed some questions. I embedded a video about fracking into Google Forms. This was very easy since Google Forms links directly with YouTube. I then added a series of questions related to the video, basically to gauge participant opinions on the topic. The students didn't get immediate feedback on their answers as Google Forms isn't a quiz checking technology but it did mean that I could open up the Google Form and see what all the students had written. I was also able to show the whole class the answers they had all written. We used the data as the basis for a class discussion. So Google Forms can be great for class surveys and class information-gathering activities. It has a place in language teaching as well as for training too.

Those are just four different ways I have used Google Forms. I often find that once I have created a certain type of questionnaire, I can just copy it, tweak it a bit and then use it again in a different context. For example I tweaked the information gathering form I created for the French teachers (See Scenario 1 above) and used it for gathering information from other groups. I simply copied it, renamed it and tweaked the questions for the next context.

continued >>>

## What question types are there in Google Forms?

Question types include multiple choice, ranking, text boxes, paragraphs, check boxes and even grid type questions. The questions can all be added to one page or broken up into pages. It is easy to add instructions to questions and there are advanced features that allow you to do things like check that the correct type of data has been written in ( for example you can check that an email address was correctly written or check a number was written correctly). Questions can also include references to links, videos, and pictures allowing quite media rich surveys.

Once you have made the questionnaire, there is a range of sharing options. You are given a link which you can simple add into a website, blog or virtual learning environment. You can also create a list of users and simply email the link to them. You even have the option of copying the embed code and then embedding the questionnaire into a webpage, blog, wiki etc. I generally just share the link but I have also used the embed link on occasion.

## Taking it further

Google Forms has some pretty sophisticated survey options that you can work with. For example you are able to create branching or maze type scenarios. This way, users are sent off to different pages depending on the answers they choose to certain questions. It doesn't work with all the question types but, for example, you can use it with multiple choice questions. I experimented with this recently. I set up a questionnaire where users chose their first language from a list and then, depending on what language they chose, they moved to different pages for further questions. You could use the same approach for playing games or creating business scenarios.

You can also build the questionnaires or surveys collaboratively. When you first set up a Google Form, you can invite other people to join and collaborate on the development of the questions with several people working together on-line. This could be very useful in a language learning context. I recently used this facility while working on an EU project where we collaboratively developed a questionnaire for feedback.

One other benefit is that Google Forms is related to other tools like Google Slides and Google Docs. They all work in the same way. So, once you have learnt one tool, you are able to use the related tools very quickly. All these tools are available in your Google Drive. To access all the tools in your Google drive, you simply need to have a Google mail account.

## Conclusion

Google Forms is a free, no fuss, easy to use tool that can be really helpful to teacher trainers. It is ideal for gathering data, getting feedback, collecting together email addresses or simply doing some sort of class survey. It makes the whole process of creating the survey, distributing it, collecting and displaying the data really efficient. It is one of the few technologies that really does what it is meant to do i.e. save us time and help us to work more effectively.

## Resources

### Try out this Google Form (it is a form to find out about your use of blended learning)

Below is a link to an example Google Form. This will give you an idea of the types of things you can do.

<http://goo.gl/forms/A97KQ8BD9Z>

### Learn to use Google Forms

There is also a video that takes you through using Google Forms in detail

[www.teachertrainingvideos.com/microsoft-google-prezi/google-forms.html](http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/microsoft-google-prezi/google-forms.html)

## The Author



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# Current Research



## Can a mindfulness-based reflective framework promote more self-aware English language teaching?

By Ya Chu Lee, UK

### Introduction

In a busy office, when other English teachers are spending their lunch time doing photocopying, answering the phone, and replying to emails, a teacher participant in this study switches off her computer monitor and focuses on eating. She feels calmed and refreshed in her break time. In an ESOL classroom, another teacher participant is facing an extremely stressed and upset group of students. The majority of the students come from conflicted countries and have a constant concern for their family living in life-threatening circumstance. In confronting the tense classroom environment, the teacher tries to observe where her mind is and is aware of her bodily sensation. The act of stepping back and looking inwards creates clarity in her mind and alleviates worries.

The study reported here aims to contribute to an area of research on ELT teacher development from a more holistic and metacognitive perspective by exploring the applications of mindfulness to ELT teachers' reflection. In spite of a rich body of literature on teacher reflection, including various theories and models, the integration of mindfulness into reflection remains under-theorised. Having worked with mindfulness training exercises for over 15 years, I believe there is insight to be gained from linking mindfulness and reflection, especially English language teacher reflection. Due to the lack of an available theoretical framework to explore potential effects, I created a Mindfulness-Based Reflective Framework (MBRF) and carried out qualitative research to explore participants' experiences. This study serves as a starting point to uncover connections between the field of ELT and mindfulness intervention.

The specific research questions are as follows:

Can mindfulness-based reflection empower teachers' innate reflective ability?

Can mindfulness-based reflection contribute to teachers' personal and professional development?

What are potential barriers to participants' mindfulness-based reflection practice?

How can the MBRF be modified for better use in any future applications?

### Background Literature

#### The essence of reflection & Schön's reflection mode (1983)

The mode of reflection discussed in this research mainly draws on the widely influential insight of Schön (1983), who views reflection as comprising two parts: 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. His view of reflection is creative, as it values not just the reflection that happens after the completion of one's practice, but also that which occurs in the moment of practice (Jiang, 2012). 'Reflection-in-action' seems most closely linked to the concept of mindfulness as it captures the importance of living in the moment and viewing each moment as an opportunity to make things better. Critics of 'reflection-in-action', however, doubt whether one can really reflect during action (e.g. Court, 1988, cited in Moon, 1999).

### Mindfulness

'Compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake.' (William, 1911, cited in Brown and Ryan, 2003, p. 823)

Mindfulness has become a 'buzzword' (Drabble, 2013) in western society (in particular the UK, Germany, and the USA) and a rapid growing body of literature has investigated its benefits in various fields. In terms of its contribution to teacher development, mindfulness has been increasingly recognised as an essential element to promote teachers' personal and professional practices (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, Jennings, et al, 2013, Bailey, 2013). However, the extreme paucity of research on mindfulness in relation to the field of ELT points to a gap in our knowledge of the potential impact of mindfulness on English language teacher reflection. One reason for this gap may be due to the lack of a clear operational definition of mindfulness (Malinowski, 2008). For the purposes of this article, the concept of mindfulness is defined as 'a mind of concentration and clarity', where the underpinning principle is 'wherever you are, that is where the mind should be' (Grand Master Wei-Chueh, 2014). In addition, Hellemans (2014) has insightfully described mindfulness as a state of mind which is still, focused and aware of what is happening without adding interpretation or emotional colour.

### Mindfulness and Reflection

There are several junctures at which mindfulness and reflection might come together and in which the former might be beneficial to the latter. These connection points are explored below.

#### Self-awareness as one key attribute

Brown & Ryan, (2003) point out that mindfulness might help one detect automatic thoughts and routine habits and therefore, possibly, to change them if this is thought necessary. This raises the question of whether mindfulness could help a teacher keep a reflective attitude, especially in routine practice when it is easy to stop thinking and reflecting upon oneself (Schön, 1983, Dewey, 1933).

#### Coping with emotional resistance to reflection

Stanley (1998) observes that a main obstacle to teachers' sustainable reflection is an emotional resilience to reflection. As Tarrant (2013) suggests, the common hindrances in the process of reflection include anxiety, fear, and a lack of confidence. According to Brown & Ryan (2003, p. 823), mindfulness concerns consciousness itself rather than 'within thoughts, feeling, and other contents of consciousness'. It suggests that mindfulness develops a skill that the mind creates a space to detach from the negative emotions developing in the course of a lesson or later when recalling or reviewing one's lesson. Therefore, mindfulness might help teachers overcome any emotions arising as a hindrance in reflection.

#### Strengthening inner reflective ability

Recent studies insightfully and consistently highlight a lack of teachers' reflective ability, even though teachers are encouraged to engage in reflection in their daily teaching (Gün, 2011, Hyacinth, 2013). In the midst of an existing debate over whether reflection is trainable, there have been many voices promoting the facilitation

continued >>>

of teacher reflection via technology like blogs (Brescia and Miller, 2006, Yang, 2009, Deng and Yuen, 2011), e-journals or diaries (Jarvis, 1992; Lee, 2007), video-recording (Tripp and Rich, 2012), and on-line forums. Conversely, a voice for strengthening teachers' innate ability to reflect seems to be missing. In the process of developing reflective teaching practice, the link between removing noise and clutter in the mind through mindfulness training and learning the artistry of reflective practice remains unexamined.

### The relation of mindfulness to personal development

There is a dearth of research on ELT teachers' reflection as it relates to personal development. Typically, the target of reflective practices has a close bond with professional development, linking to the efficiency of teaching performance and meeting ever-escalating targets. However, as has been argued, a personal focus in the reflection named as 'core reflection' (Korthagen, 2004, Soloway, 2011) seems to be essential yet neglected (Hamachek, 1999). While mindfulness intervention is proved to foster wellbeing and positive emotions of teachers (Meiklejohn, et al, 2012), it may be the case that the integration of mindfulness in reflection might create a much needed balance between professional and personal development for sustainable teaching in a long term career.

### The design of the Mindfulness-Based Reflective Framework (MBRF)

The aim of the Mindfulness-Based Reflective Framework designed specifically for this research is to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of awakening to their present mind and maintaining a lucid and focused state of mind in stillness or activity, during teaching or free time. A unique characteristic of the MBRF is that the reflection not only focuses on the technical level of practice (e.g. what did I do?), but the essence of practice (e.g. is my mind scattered or focused while doing things?)

The skeleton of the MBRF is drawn from Schön's (1983) reflective mode of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. The MBRF also offers a new thought on seeing the nature of reflection- it is not just a process of thinking; it is also a time to calm one's mind and clear out thoughts for better productivity and the reduction of possible negative emotion through evaluation of one's practice. For further details about the MBRF, please visit the blog: <https://mindfulbasedreflectiveframework.wordpress.com/>.

The MBRF consists of two sections. 'Reflection-in-action' is designed for teachers to use in class and 'Reflection-on-action' is used in teachers' free time.

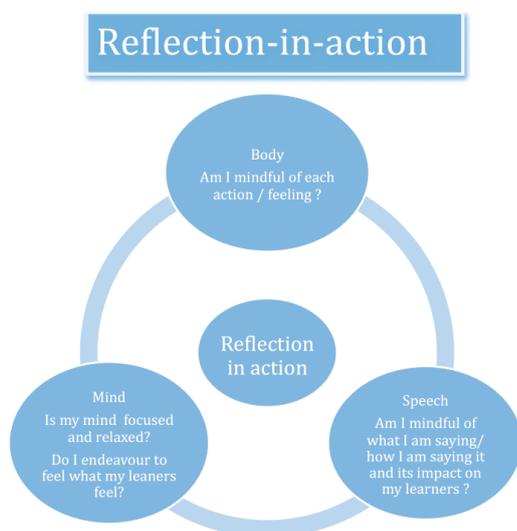


Figure 1 'Reflection-in-action'

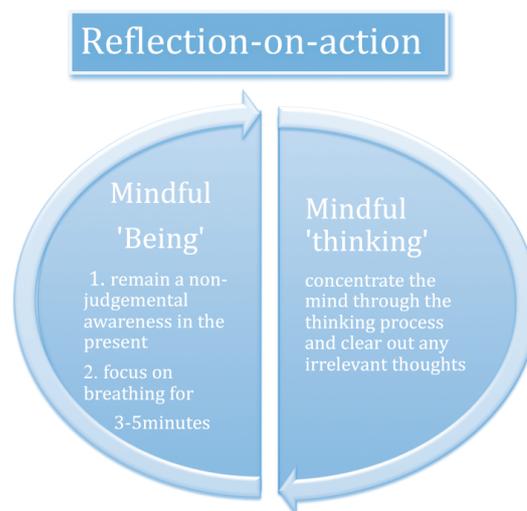


Figure 2 'Reflection-on-action'

### 'Reflection-in-action'

'Reflection-in-action' presents itself in a form of a series of questions. Teachers could choose one of the questions to reflect upon their practices on the level of body, speech, or mind. Each question serves as a reminder for teachers to maintain a lucid and constant awareness of what they are doing during teaching.

### 'Reflection-on-action'

'Reflection-on-action' consists of two sections – 'mindful thinking' and 'mindful being' stages – and is practiced in teachers' free time. At the 'mindful thinking' stage, teachers reflect on what has happened in class and keep an eye if the content of their thinking is meaningful and relevant. After their reflection, then they move to the 'mindful being' stage. Teachers could clam down the mind and clear their minds of all thoughts any judgments by focusing on their breathing for a period of time.

### A supplementary mindfulness toolkit

It might be fair to say that mindfulness can easily become a shallow concept if one does not practise (Khong, 2009); therefore, the need to practise mindfulness becomes significant. Many scholars suggest that mindfulness is an inherent human capacity (Saltzman, 2014, Kabat-Zinn 2003, Jennings, et al, 2013). Kabat-Zinn (2003) further addresses its universal characteristic by stating that no matter whether one is Buddhist or not, 'we are all mindful to one degree or another' (p. 146). However, the ability to be mindful needs to be cultivated and refined through regular exercises (Brown, et al., 2007). Therefore, I produced a toolkit of mindfulness exercises which teachers can do in their free time to help strengthen the level of their awareness and concentration and also accompany the practice of the MBRF (See the appendix).

## Methodology

### Sampling

The 10 participants in this study are all experienced female TESOL lecturers or ESOL tutors in 7 institutions across the UK (including a university, adult colleges, and language schools). Their ELT teaching experience ranged from 3 to over 30 years.

The study utilized a self-selection sampling method in which participants were recruited in two ways. The first was via an invitation to join the study delivered via JSCMAIL to a large group of UK education and research communities. The second was via direct emails to the heads or managers of large ESOL or EFL organisations in the UK.

Before the participants agreed to take part in this study and sent back an electronic version of a consent form, they had been given full access to the MBRF, the supplementary toolkit, as well as a participant information sheet on a purpose-built blog, all of which are described in detail below.

### Procedure

This study involved participants in implementing the MBRF inside and outside of the classroom. Each participant agreed to commit themselves to use the MBRF as much as possible in a three week trial, although their level of participation was completely voluntary. The study was conducted twice –once for three weeks in May 2014 and again in June for the same time period. Two time periods were offered in order to obtain an adequate number of participants. It is commonly acknowledged that mindfulness intervention studies require a period of time to test effects (Williams and Penman, 2011). A three week period was deemed to be enough time to allow participants some flexibility in implementing the MBRF but not so much time that the participants would view it as a lengthy commitment. Each participant could decide on the way of incorporating the MBRF and fitting it into their daily practice in class and after class. The role of the author/researcher was to monitor their engagement with the study via weekly contact, ensuring potential difficulties or questions arising in their practice were resolved.

### Data collection methods

Data were collected from May to July 2014. In an attempt to maximize the scope, richness, depth and fidelity of data within pragmatic limitations, multiple data collection instruments were employed including online-questionnaires, interviews by phone and email, and a blog. The participants were required to complete an online survey, comprising open-ended questions at three stages – before, during, and after the study. With the aim of probing the participants' personal voices and describing in depth their actual engagement with the MBRF in daily life (Charmaz, 1995, cited in Miller and Glassner, 2004), telephone and email interviewing were also conducted. In order to compensate for it being a long-distance study, a blog was available for the participants to access the related information of the MBRF as well as to share their feedback or post any queries.

### Data analysis and interpretation

#### Data coding and analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted sequentially at two stages by the researcher. First, thematic analysis of the online survey data through careful reading and coding with the aid of Atlas.ti software facilitated the interpretation of the participants' use of the MBRF. Subsequently, the telephone and the email interview data aided the search for explanation of the interconnections of the previously coded themes. In addition, the technique of respondent validation was used for further clarification from the participants to avoid any bias from the researcher.

## Findings

This section presents the results of this research according to, five themes:

- 1 Individual differences in using and perceiving the MBRF
- 2 Potential benefits of empowering reflective ability
- 3 Potential links with professional development
- 4 Potential links with personal development
- 5 Barriers to using the MBRF

## Individual differences in terms of use of and views on the MBRF

The findings indicate a complexity under the surface of each participant's actual practices, presenting a wide spectrum of use, from hardly having time to implement the MBRF to fully engaging with it in every moment of life. Often participants used it on a more ideological level rather than following up the instruction of the MBRF in a more systematic way.

### 1.1 Various ways of using the MBRF

#### 1 Using the MBRF as a systematic instruction

'I have been practising 'Mindful thinking' and 'Mindful being'...' (Participant A, email)

'I decided to focus on being mindful of my speech and its impact on learners. And on reflecting after teaching I tried to practice mindful eating and walking.' (Participant D, survey)

#### 2 Viewing the MBRF as an ideological principle

'Honestly, I did not have time to read everything. I picked up one is concentrating in mind, taking time out and focusing.' (Participant F, telephone)

'The framework has started to support me simply throughout the concept of awareness...being aware of the moment.' (Participant H, email)

#### 3 Using the MBRF as a relaxation tool

'I have applied it [the MBRF] in terms of a. Full concentration on the situation and b. Using it as a relaxation tool for myself.' (Participant E, survey)

### 1.2 Various views on the design of the MBRF

(Positive feedback suggests the design of the MBRF offers opportunities for meaningful and useful engagement for teachers. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of the framework include a lack of concrete suggestions for their daily practice and ambiguity in when and where to practice leading to a risk of misunderstanding.

#### Advantages

'I like 'Mindful thinking and being part [in 'Reflection-on-Action' of the MBRF]... thinking about working through my own process my own thought process to be aware of what is relevant and what isn't in order to achieve clarity' (Participant B, telephone)

'Having these two types of reflection [in/on action] distinguished has been really thought provoking.' (Participant A, email)

'I find the breathing techniques very calming and it does help to focus the mind.' (Blog, to ensure privacy, the participant is unnamed)

#### Disadvantages

'If there is a specific task to do, it might enhance participation in week 1.' (Participant H, email)

'More instructive input such as videos or [a] CD and more concrete weekly tasks.' (Participant G, survey)

'I was under the impression that these [the MBRF] have to be done as soon as the lesson was over.' (Participant B, telephone)

### 1.3 Various views on the practices of mindfulness-based reflection

'It helped me to reconnect with myself as a person. I usually focus on the learners.' (Participant B, survey)

'It has reminded me that not only DO?I do my yoga and meditation in the morning but I should carry it into the classroom.' (Participant C, survey)

'I think the MBRF has helped me to feel the importance of being in the present and very present to the students.' (Participant D, survey)

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## Empowering reflective ability

The data suggests a closer relationship between the practice of the MBRF and enhanced self-awareness. However, the relationship between the MBRF and critical thinking is not explicitly represented within the data. With very limited time and energy to practice the MBRF in many participants' cases, what they chose to do mostly in their trial was to reflect upon their mind and try to be more focused in the moment. The majority of the participants reported that they felt more aware of themselves in class or free time from three levels: mind, body and speech.

### On the level of the mind

'I am more aware of my feelings in class, e.g. anxiety about observations or feelings of frustration if I find a student's question hard to answer.' (Participant G, Survey)

### On the level of the body

In participant A's case, she focused on her body language in class and evaluated the impacts on her learners. The data suggests that she has noticed two new things about her use of hand gestures and standing position in class. By noticing that, she started making adjustments.

'I hadn't noticed how much I use my hands in class.' (Participant, A, survey)

### On the level of speech

'Having the focus on my speech and whether my mind is focused or scattered has been very productive...both have led to me giving students clearer instructions...I benefitted from noticing and being aware of students' language with greater acuity,' (Participant D, survey)

'In terms of delivering, it becomes a lot more structured and focused.' (Participant F, telephone)

## Potential links with professional development

The data show that the positive effects linking professional and personal progress were often found from the participants who devoted more time and energy to the practices of the MBRF.

In terms of professional development, two issues emerged from the analysis. First, the correlation with a more genuine understanding of learners and better classroom interaction is highlighted. Secondly, the data reveal that the MBRF was applied to reduce stress and enhance a sense of calm when facing an unpleasant or stressful situation in class, including dealing with learners' negative emotions, having an unannounced classroom observation, and facing a class with low motivation.

### Interaction with learners

'I've seen a change in students' behaviour as I've changed. Noticed a deeper sense of communication.' (Participant A, email)

'I think that I was more aware of each student and the detail of what was going on...I am aware for both myself and for students that if your mind is elsewhere then you are just going through the motions – not engaging or not having any of those 'yes!' moments.' (Participant D, survey)

### Dealing with stress in class

'I had just had an unannounced lesson observation. I was told one minute before the observation took place that I would be observed...The mindful application of 'being in the moment' really helped me focus...I stayed very much in the moment and this helped me feel relaxed – the lesson was very natural, the students did not get nervous.' (Participant A, email)

'Noticing/acknowledging the feelings of [anxiety] prompted me to get back to concentrating on the lesson itself and what was happening in the class' (Participant G, survey)

'It's useful to do this with a group that I have been annoyed with!' (Participant H, email)

## Potential links with personal development

### The enhancement of a sense of wellbeing

Some participants suggested that practising mindfulness and breathing techniques had positive effects of enhanced calmness and relaxation and reduction of stress and burnout.

'So using your methods [the MBRF] I did find it helped me to organise things better and relax more...I have not been stressed.' (Participant F, telephone)

'I can see how physiologically it [the breathing technique] can bring your body and your mind to a calmer state...It is very natural.' (Participant E, telephone)

### Changes in lifestyle

Some participants applied the core principle of the MBRF in the rest of their life and demonstrated new changes in their lifestyle including eating, walking, gardening...etc.

'I have tried being mindful when I eat...the result has been eat less and feel slightly more satisfied at the end of meal.' (Participant D, email)

'I am slowing my regular speedy walking pace and calming my breath so that I don't rush.' (Participant H, email)

## The barriers to using the MBRF

In terms of the barriers faced by participants and the difficulties they had engaging with the MBRF, the main message seems to be that a busy life, stress, and lack of concentration are the biggest challenges. However, in some participants' cases, making time is worthwhile as it serves as a useful counterpoint to creative energy and results in some calm in the midst of an otherwise busy day. Furthermore, realizing the noise and the lack of concentration in the mind can be seen as a new realization path about oneself opening up and leading to the possibility of making changes.

### Busy life

'For me it's the time I don't have.' (Participant I, survey)

'I've not got to the stage where I can honestly say I've applied it regularly...not yet practised it within teaching practice.' (Participant J, survey)

'if you can organise your day and just allow yourself that little luxury that I think it help got benefits that is sort of what I am finding it because I'm consciously trying to continue [the MBRF].' (Participant F, telephone)

### Stress

Int: Do you find any difficulties while applying this framework in or after class?

Participant C: 'Yes, of course. See teaching is...so intense. There is so little time to reflect...to step outside of that experience which is completely taken you is quite a challenging really.' (Participant C, telephone interview)

'Sometimes a heavy world load is fun, challenging, stimulating and mindfulness acts in partnership with that, a useful counterpoint to creative energy.' (Participant H, email)

### Difficulty in concentration

'I found it hard to be mindful. It [the MBRF] made me aware how many things I was thinking about at the same time...I tried to be mindful, but I was not very successful. At least, it made me aware why I was not able to be mindful' (Participant G, telephone)

'I've tried the simpler ones!...But I am soon distracted by thoughts of tasks and to-do lists.' (Participant J, survey)

'I have tried the breathing exercises. I found it difficult to concentrate but will persevere.' (*Participant E, survey*)

'I think it's a challenge to stop for a moment and really focus on doing one thing at a time (or just doing nothing)...It takes a bit of learning to focus, like using a new muscle.' (*Participant A, survey*)

## Discussion

### 1 Can mindfulness-based reflection empower teachers' innate reflective ability?

#### Self-awareness

There is evidence in this small study of a strong link between participants' enhanced level of awareness and their employing the MBRF, which echoes Jennings et al. (2013, p. 379) suggestion that, 'mindfulness promotes...metacognitive awareness of one's moment-to-moment experience'. From this aspect, mindfulness-based reflection has the potential to assist teachers in empowering their reflective ability through bringing their mind to notice the uniqueness and importance of each moment in life. The so-called 'automatic or routine practices' seemed to have been transformed into a more attentive practice, or even a new experiment, not viewed simply as a job on a checklist to be finished.

#### 'In-turn' awareness towards learners

Brookfield (1995) used the phrase 'in-turn', meaning to understand how students perceive a teacher's actions and words, and suggested that it helps a teacher to be aware of 'different worlds in the same classroom' (p. 92). Mindfulness-based reflection might enhance 'in-turn' awareness. Some participants attempted to see themselves through students' eyes by reflecting on the impact of their speech on learners or how much they can feel what learners feel.

Furthermore, the research has provided a different perspective on Schön's view on 'reflection-in-action'. It suggests that by integrating the element of mindfulness, 'reflection-in-action' could take place in every moment of teaching by a willingness to be more attentive to the present situation rather than necessarily starting with 'puzzles of practice' (Munby and Russell, 1990, cited in Akbari, 2008, p. 194). Likewise, Candy (1985) seems to describe correctly the aspect of potential values many participants' experience on the 'reflection-in-action' in the MBRF:

'If people are aware of what they are presently doing and can be encouraged to reflect on it and consider alternatives, they are in an excellent position to change...If people's awareness of what is happening to them can be highlighted...they can make more of each experience.' (cited in Moon, 1999, p. 84)

### 2 Can mindfulness-based reflection contribute to teachers' personal and professional development?

The current study shows that the participants who engaged more with the MBRF appeared to report the effects more. For those whose engagement with the MBRF was minimal, reports on the effects on any potential teacher development are also limited.

The data appears to be consistent with other studies on mindfulness intervention in terms of echoing positive effects in both aspects of personal and professional development (e.g. Meiklejohn, et al, 2012, Bailey, 2013.). Furthermore, the outcome of the current study also supports other studies on the value of teacher reflection, suggesting its strong associations with enhancement of teaching practice and a better understanding of a classroom (e.g. Graves, 2002, Akbari, 2007).

Interestingly, a surprising message in the data is that the benefits of personal development and professional growth seem to be correlated and tend to occur concurrently. From this aspect, reflecting upon the mind, as proposed in the MBRF, could be seen as a point of conjunction which connects a teacher's emotion and wellbeing as a person with their professional performance.

On one level, focusing on the mind helpfully improves energy and one's emotional state (Jennings, et al., 2013, p.377); on another level, focusing on the mind facilitates teaching effectiveness. It could possibly lead to a win-win situation for teachers and learners.

### 3 What are potential barriers to participants using the MBRF?

Each individual has his or her own preferred way of learning, so it appears that the current MBRF might not suit everyone. Another area which the data has shed light on is that individual motivation among the participants is varied; it is not unrealistic to suggest that the MBRF might be harder for users with lower motivation.

Another potential barrier is the challenge of concentrating the mind. This difficulty can be seen as a battle between one's awareness and one's old habit of letting thoughts wander. Brown and Ryan (2003, p. 822) point out that 'individuals differ in their propensity or willingness to be aware and to sustain attention to what is occurring in the present' and 'this mindful capacity...can be sharpened or dulled by a variety of factors'. From this point of view, the MBRF could be more challenging for some participants.

### How can the MBRF be modified for better use in any future applications?

#### The content of the MBRF

In theory, the concept of the MBRF appeared to be beneficial to evoke the significance of being awakened to the present mind and therefore seems to have been successful in leading participants to a higher state of awareness to reflect critically on their routine practices. On a practical level, participants clearly suggest that it would be preferable if the MBRF could be broken down into weekly or even daily small tasks to try out rather than being faced with an entire package from which they can choose their own tasks.

#### 4 Limitations & Future modifications

In retrospect, it seems that the participants' limited time and energy to take part in the study have constrained the results, but so too have my multiple roles as the designer of the MBRF, consultant of participants' practices, interviewer, data collector and solo researcher in this study. Each role required various key sensibilities and expertise, sometimes with conflicting goals and requiring degrees of compromise. Moreover, much remains to be explored in terms of implementation of the MBRF. For instance, a longer trial study involving an entire TEFL/TESOL department would result in the engagement of a greater number of participants as well as provide a physical community of practice for participants to share understanding and experiences. This would not only help to develop participants' own understanding of mindfulness-based reflection, but it would also provide much needed data in this under-researched area of teacher development.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the existence of a number of impediments to the successful pursuit of the MBRF, namely stress, heavy teacher workloads, and lack of concentration, this small scale research has demonstrated that mindfulness has the potential to facilitate teacher reflection and bring potential benefits to personal and professional development. The MBRF can provide new dimensions on teacher reflection and mindfulness practice: that each moment could be a golden moment for reflection by focusing on the present and removing clutter from the mind. In the same way that a video-analysis tool can be useful for promoting reflection – as one can 'see with [one's] own eyes' (Tripp and Rich, 2011, p. 734) – mindfulness might possibly facilitate reflection as one can see with one's own mind in a less scattered way. Furthermore, from the aspect of mindfulness intervention, mindfulness techniques cannot necessarily be employed in one's free time, but can be integrated into teachers' moment-by-moment classroom experience.

continued >>>

A case study of one TEFL or TESOL department was suggested as a possible improvement on this research. Another profitable area of future study could involve a controlled trial to compare the effects of reflection with the inclusion of mindfulness and the effects of reflection with other reflective tools. Such a study might discern to what extent mindfulness intervention in reflection differs from other reflective approaches. It would be worth shedding light on how mindfulness intervention could possibly work hand in hand with other reflective approaches to support English language teachers.

Boyer and Mitgang (1996, cited in Carmel-Gilfilen, 2012, p. 47) insightfully suggest that the ultimate value of education is not just to build up knowledge, 'but to channel that knowledge to humane ends'. With this in mind, the MBRF fulfills this end by enhancing not only the way in which the mind connects with itself, but also enhances the interaction between the teacher and students. It highlights the possibility that mindfulness-based reflection leads a teacher to cultivate an ability of taking care of oneself and learners in the largest sense, gaining more strength to tackle the internal and external challenges and making the teaching more valuable.

In conclusion, this piece of research has filled a gap in the literature on ELT reflection by building a strong case for the inclusion of mindfulness and by creating a prototype mindfulness-based reflective framework. The MBRF, in its current form, appears to provide both benefits and challenges to teachers but requires wider use and possible further modifications to determine its full potential. To be mindful or not to be? That is the question that remains for teachers and teacher educators.

## Appendix: A mindfulness-training toolkit

### Basic mindfulness skills: Do daily activities 'mindfully'

#### Suggestion one: walking training

When you are walking at a normal speed, place your awareness in your foot and feel how it touches the ground.

In your free time, try to spare 3-5 minutes to have a leisurely walk in a relaxing place. You will need to walk as slowly as you can and pay a constant attention to the subtle changes in the movement of your legs. E.g. lightly lift your heel, feel your toes bend, then shift your weight to the other foot.

#### Suggestion two: eating training

In your meal time, try to eat food 'mindfully'. Leave your computer or smart phone behind sometimes. Just concentrate on the eating itself. Chew food slowly and feel how your mouth, tongue and lower jaw work together during the process.

#### Suggestion three: washing hands training

Every time you wash your hands, be mindful of this normal daily action. Be aware of which hand is used to turn on/off the tap and how you rub your hands. Although the process usually takes less than one minute, check if your concentration can stay in the moment of washing hands without other distraction.

#### Suggestion four: you could apply the similar principle to every day-to-day activity. Be mindful of it!

#### Sitting-meditation techniques:

The first important thing in doing meditation is to clarify the purpose of doing so. It can be seen as a mental training, helping us to be more resilient and calm under ever-changing circumstances, followed by the benefits of physical and emotional wellbeing. If you would like to sit in a classic seated position, such as 'Full lotus sitting position', 'Half-lotus position' or in a simply crossed leg position, it is easy to find diagrams or pictures on the internet.

'Breath-counting method' - suitable to use when the mind is scattered.

Sit in a quiet place, where you feel safe and will not be disturbed easily. Close your eyes. Relax your body and mind. Collect your mind inward to focus on breathing. Be mindful of the breathing and slightly place your attention on the tip of your nose. Keep breathing through your nose naturally and keep your mouth closed. During inhalation, you just need to be aware of the air coming in. During exhalation, silently count from 1 to 10. If the breathing is not so long, just count 1 to 3 or 1 to 5. Whenever the mind wanders away and clings to irrelevant things, detect it as soon as possible and bring your attention back to your breathing and counting without making judgment. After the repetition for a while, if your mind grows quiet, you can just sit with the awareness. The length of meditation depends on individuals' needs. After meditation, it is suggested to gently massage your body.

## The Author



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# Trainer Background

## Improving listening skills in a foreign language through working on pronunciation

By Augusto Neto, Brazil

### Introduction

Successful understanding of natural speech entails a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing (Buck, 1995; Rost, 2002). The former involves resorting to higher order schemata, general information based on life learning and prior knowledge of the context within which the listening occurs to construe meaning, while the latter activates bottom level schemata, from phonemes and phonemic units to words, and from phrases to utterances, to decode speech (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Students who rely primarily on top-down processing tend to concentrate on the big picture and use the context of a listening passage for cues as to what is being said. In contrast, those who have a predilection for bottom-up processing, or little contextual understanding of a subject, depend on their knowledge of individual sounds, phonological features, words and grammar, often feeling they cannot perform a task if they stumble upon words they do not understand (Bilokcuoğlu, 2014). Top-down and bottom-up processing combine to create an interactive processing model. However, the extent to which this mixture takes place is heavily influenced by a student's cognitive style and level of proficiency (Fatemi, Vahedi, & Seyyedrezaie, 2014).

### Breakdowns in communication

Even advanced speakers of ESL, with at least four years of academic studies in an environment where English is the first language, have been shown to face difficulties following the content of lectures (Harada, 1997). Harada points out that top-down processing is not at fault in this scenario, since lecture-goers are well aware of the content of the lessons, and have studied the subjects of these classes for a number of years. According to Harada, the students' lack of understanding of how content words are reduced in fluent speech can lead to mishearings and possible miscommunication, affecting their ability to thoroughly grasp what lecturers say. Although more readily associated with ESL, mishearings and breakdowns in communication are also common among native speakers of English. Here is an example from (Harada, 1997).

Charley: Hi, I'm at the Quality Inn near L.A. airport.

Marianne: The Holiday Inn?

Charley: No, the Quality Inn.



PB

Marianne seems to be more familiar with The Holiday Inn. This instance of mishearing can be explained by the fact that the actual frequency of a word in listening or written text can affect how seamlessly it is processed (Förster, 1976). Similarly, dialect also contributes to miscommunication. Charley uses the same stressed vowel /ɒ/ in *Holiday* and *Quality*. Marianne, on the other hand, has /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ respectively (Harada, 1997).

The findings above indicate that grammatical and lexical knowledge alone do not suffice to establish successful oral communication. Marianne's own internal model of expected pronunciation also plays an important role in mishearing Charley.

Understanding spoken language comprises three overlapping phases (Anderson, 2010), perception, parsing, and utilization. Relating words listeners know to the sounds they hear is the first of the three stages proposed. Parsing refers to words being analysed in units according to grammar or lexical cues. To interpret and utilize the meaning and functions of utterances, phonological, grammatical and lexical levels are matched to listeners' prior knowledge.

Google's search autocomplete feature serves as a pretty good example of how this works. As we type letters into the search box, Google's algorithm predicts and displays search queries based on frequent search activities, linking these results to previous searches and content viewed by users. Much like Google's autocomplete function, the brain instantly analyses, discards and matches incoming speech, or queries, according to visual, contextual, grammatical, lexical and audio signals.

Since learners use their own mental model of pronunciation for lexical retrieval (Reed, Way, & Michaud, 2010), Anderson's overlapping stages suggest a direct link between one's pronunciation and their ability to comprehend spoken discourse.

The Cohort model of auditory word recognition (Davis, 2007) helps to explain how oral input is processed in the brain. It argues that speech comprehension takes place by continuously computing incoming spoken text as it is heard. At all times, the system processes the best interpretation of presently available input, matching information in the speech signal to prior lexical and grammatical context. Identification is achieved by comparing incoming speech with known lexical items. In this scenario, a learner's own mispronunciation can potentially act as a barrier to impede listening comprehension, since, for example, a student who pronounces the word *hostel* as /həʊs'tel/ will activate cohorts for /həʊ/ as in *hotel*, leading to mishearing, delayed comprehension or even a total breakdown in communication. Such results are demonstrated by the continual feedback loop (Reed et al., 2010) of learned production and expected perception, in which speakers use their own output—their own mental model of a sound—as input for their reception and perception. Therefore, in an ESL context, listening and pronunciation practices should not be dealt with separately, on the grounds that students' voice resonators, i.e. throat, nose and mouth are an extension of their auditory system.

continued >>>

## Teachers can help

Hence, teachers should strive to help students achieve a level of pronunciation accuracy that would not only guarantee intelligibility, the most important aspect of all communication (Munro, 2011), but also inter-intelligibility, where learners' speech production is understood and serves as a perception model to guarantee their own listening comprehension. It is important to note that this principle does not imply ESL students should work towards native-like pronunciation. They should, however, reduce their reliance on the top-down processes favoured by communicative language teaching which, since its inception, has made teachers concentrate on listening practices and procedures which improve learners' ability to guess what is being said. Since, there is frequently sufficient contextual information to help listeners to infer which word is being used, provided they are able to identify some parts of the word correctly (Brown, 1990).

In conclusion, I believe teacher trainers must equip teachers with the necessary tools to take pronunciation practice in the classroom beyond cosmetic and aesthetic procedures. Both experienced professionals and fresh ESL teachers should be encouraged to work with students on bottom-up processing techniques, focusing on the recognition of individual sounds as well as progressing to aspects of connected speech. This should be integrated into pronunciation activities so that the brain could be trained to produce and store the sounds it will be able to more seamlessly process when tasked with interpreting fluent speech. The appendix below contains an example exercise which could be used to aid students in recognising and producing inter-intelligible pronunciation/listening skills by expanding their knowledge and production of common features of connected speech, such as assimilation, reduction and elision.

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## Appendix A

Suggested activity for in-class work with a group of adults, working-towards CEF B2.

### Pre-listening

To activate schemata, start the lesson with a short discussion on whether students have ever thought about starting their own business.

Split students into pairs and ask them to write a list of what they consider to be the five most important steps to be taken by prospective entrepreneurs before going into business.

Ask students to share their ideas with the whole group and write them on the board.

Rearrange pairs for students to decide what type of business is most likely to succeed in a particular city.

### While listening

- **Gist** – Play the recording and ask students to discuss why the woman has come to the office.
- **Detail** – Play the passage again for students to answer where the business would be located and what the woman needs to get before operations start. Give them time to discuss other aspects of the idea they found interesting.

### Bottom-up processing practice

- **Note-taking** – Play the passage for students to write down as many words and clusters of words they can recognise.
- **Counting words** – Tell students you will play the recording again, pausing after every sentence. They have to count the number of words they hear, drawing a line on paper for every word.
- **Reconstructing text** – Ask students to write the words collected during note-taking in the gaps according to what they can remember.
- **Transcribing** – Play the recording for students to fill in the remaining gaps. Pause at the end of every phrase to give students time to transcribe the text.
- **Noticing A** – Show students the tape script and ask them to circle the instances where their transcriptions are different to what is actually said.

**Noticing B** – Ask students to use their mobile phones to record themselves reading the tape script.

**Noticing C** – Give students time to compare their pronunciation and intonation to the model provided and ask them to rerecord their work based on observations made.

**Noticing D** – Drill troublesome sentences and draw students' attention to the features of connected speech and individual sounds they do not notice.

**Noticing E** – Students do a final mobile phone recording and comparison.

### Post-listening

Allow time for the group to discuss how likely the idea is to be successful in the city and make suggestions to help the entrepreneur to develop her plan.

## Appendix B

### Tape script

**Scenario:** An entrepreneur meets a business adviser seeking help to start her own coffee shop.

**BA:** Good morning. So, how can I help you?

**E:** I've got an idea for a mobile coffee shop and I want to know how I go about getting a street trading licence.

**BA:** Well, I'd recommend going to the city council. Is it just one site you want to operate at?

**E:** Not really. I want to move around. The station in the morning, the main shopping street at lunch time, and so on. Is there a possibility of getting a multi-site licence?

**BA:** Mmmm, that's tricky. I think you ought to try applying for a single licence to begin with. But actually the first thing you should do is go and talk to the city council about your plans.

**E:** So, are you advising me to be completely open with them from the start?

**BA:** Yes, they're very friendly. But before going there, make sure you have all the details. My advice would be to write a clear business plan and take it to them.

**E:** Thank you. That's very helpful.

(Extracted from *Aspire – Upper-Intermediate – Workbook*, page 95. Authors: Robert Crossley, Paul Dummett, John Hughes, John Naunton, Rebecca Robb Benne. Publisher: Cengage Learning – ISBN-10: 1133564526 ISBN-13: 9781133564522)

## Postscript

This article is the basis for an academic study I'm running. I have 60 students who have had around 450 hours of classroom learning and are working towards CEFR B2 taking part in the study.

All my students have 200 minutes of English lessons every week. To start the study, all students took a sample FCE listening test. Then, students were split into 2 groups, one participating group and a control group. The participating group is having 40 minutes of specific pronunciation practice a week.

At the end of the term, both groups will take another FCE sample exam. If the hypothesis is correct, the group undergoing extra pronunciation practice will have improved at a higher rate than the control group. I will keep you posted on the results!

## The Author



From 2005 to 2008, I worked as a teacher trainer in my native Brazil. I was responsible for recruiting new teaching staff and providing them with the basic knowledge of approaches, methodologies and procedures required before venturing into EFL/ESL teaching. Since 2008, I have been working as a teacher at a branch of the Cultura Inglesa, in Brazil, tutoring students from all ages and levels, including business, ESP and

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# Trainee Voices

### The Trainee Voices column gives space to the points of view of those who are on, or have recently completed, teacher education courses.

I met Emily Curran at the Language Fair at the IATEFL conference in Birmingham, UK in the Spring of 2016. At the Fair, individual presenters have a table, a bit like a market stall. At the start of the event, someone at the front of the hall gives a brief title and description of each presenter's topic. From then on conference goers can drift from table to table until they find one on a topic that interests them. The 'stall holder' talks and answers questions from those who have stopped at their table. From the organiser's point of view, it is a great way to get a lot of presenters squeezed into a crowded day's programme. I stopped at Emily's table where she had chosen the catchy title of 'Diary of a DELTA trainee'.

**TW:** Emily, what are you doing work wise at the moment?

**EC:** I'm currently teaching full time general English classes to multinational adults at Bell Cambridge, UK.

**TW:** And you are doing a Cambridge Diploma course?

**EC:** Yes, I did the first module of the course completely online from February – June of 2015 and the second module was blended (part face to face and part online) with Bell in Cambridge whilst mostly working part time. I completed that in November 2015. I've just started module 3 online, focusing on teaching one to one.

**TW:** What made you decide to do a presentation at the IATEFL Language Fair?

**EC:** Initially it was because I wanted to attend IATEFL. Our school encourages people to present and, if we get accepted, then the school will fund our trip, which is great. I originally applied to do a thirty-minute talk, or a short presentation, but was accepted to have a stand at the ILF instead. It was really the perfect way into presenting for the first time as it was quite low key. It meant that I didn't have to face the fear of standing in front of a room full of people who are probably far more experienced than me. And also because the topic was so personal

**TW:** What were the main points you wanted to share with conference goers?

**EC:** I wanted to make myself available as a brain for people to come and pick. The main focus I suppose was to provide information about doing module one and two of the CEELT Delta course and about my personal experience, including what I struggled with.

**TW:** Can you say a bit about what you struggled with?

**EC:** I think that time management was the most important thing for me. It was difficult to know how much time everything would take and therefore how much time to spend on each thing. Sometimes it was difficult to know when to stop as well.

**TW:** And how did you overcome those difficulties?

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**EC:** Having a work plan at the beginning helped. When I was writing it out I basically just copied the template from the course I was following, and it didn't make much sense. But as the course progressed it was really handy to have it as a guide. As well as this I also made regular to do lists and tried to break everything down into manageable chunks. Making time at the weekend to rest was also really important. I also made sure that I used my time at work really efficiently and sought out quiet spaces away from distractions. I was lucky enough to have the flexibility to work part time during the course which was a huge advantage. Cooking big batches of Chili and stew at the weekend helped save time on cooking during the week too!

**TW:** Did you have any resources on your stand?

**EC:** On the stand I provided examples of my lesson plans from the course, the module handbooks, speech bubbles for people to add to and a leaflet with a brief overview of what to expect, key survival materials and top tips. I've put some of the resources below.

**TW:** Was the Language Fair a good experience overall?

**EC:** It was a great forum. I chose something that was based on my experience, a kind of case study in a way, which made me feel more confident in myself as it meant that there was no 'right' or 'wrong' way to go about it.

**TW:** So would you recommend this as a good way for would-be presenters to get started on their conference careers?

**EC:** Absolutely! Especially if you're not that confident or if you don't feel that well-established because it really takes the pressure off. The hard work comes in the planning stages when you're deciding how best to engage the "audience" and what kind of things they might find useful. For me it turned out that people mostly wanted to come and ask me questions, but quite a lot of people took away the leaflets and a few people looked through the sample lesson plans too.

## Books

**The Delta handbook** Read the corresponding part for each module *before* you start that module.

**How to Pass Delta** by Damian Williams This is a comprehensive breakdown of what each part of each module requires, how it is assessed and guidance in passing, including top tips.

**A-Z of ELT** by Scott Thornbury (Macmillan). Particularly useful for module one, but I used this throughout the course as a reference and still use it now.

**English Grammar for Language Teachers** by Martin Parrott (CUP). A solid grammar reference book for teachers with guided tasks to check understanding at the end of each chapter.

**About Language – Tasks for Teachers of English** by Scott Thornbury (CUP). This guides teachers through exploration of language and has a comprehensive key and commentary.

**Discover English** by Rod Bolitho and Brian Tomlinson (Heinemann). The same as above.

**How Languages are Learned** by Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (OUP). Particularly useful for module one – provides insight into theories of first and second language acquisition and classroom use.

## Online resources

**www.scribd.com** – If you don't have a well-stocked library at your school, this is a good place to go for online access to books – you pay a monthly fee.

**www.quizlet.com** – search for Cambridge Delta module one terms. This is a website for reviewing vocabulary (useful for module one).

## People

**Participants:** make use of other participants! They can be great as study buddies, for moral support, or as sources of knowledge (or even of how not to do it!).

**Your tutors:** these guys are great! Make the most out of them (but remember that they are people too and also have lives!).

**Colleagues:** ask around and get advice from colleagues who have done (or are doing) the Delta.

**Friends and family:** warn them of the oncoming stress so that they are prepared too.

## The Author



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# Interview



I attended Jemma's presentation at the IATEFL conference in Birmingham in the Spring of 2016. It was so interesting that I invited her to do an interview for the journal.

**TW:** Jemma, can you tell me a bit about what you do and where you work for starters?

**JP:** I work at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano in the predominantly German-speaking area of Italy, where I teach ESP and EAP to mainly undergraduate students. The university is a trilingual university, where teaching is done in German, Italian and English, so typically students will study a third of their subjects in each of the languages. I teach ESP and EAP within the faculty programmes and these courses aim to help students with the English that they have to use when studying in English, as well as with the English they are likely to need once they have moved

into the world of work. I have been teaching here for the past 18 years, and when I am not teaching, I am working hard on my PhD in Applied Linguistics, which I am doing at Aston University as a distance learner.

**TW:** And you have become interested in EFL teaching and learning materials?

**JP:** I am interested in EFL teaching materials as my courses are very specific and as such, I rarely if ever make use of course books. Therefore, I am always looking for new ideas and materials for my students so that the courses I teach are as relevant and as useful as possible. As far as the materials I use in class are concerned, I tend to adapt existing materials to my students' needs and increasingly write my own materials. It's difficult to find decent published materials, for example, for students studying product design in a German-speaking Italian university!

**TW:** And you are particularly interested in gender balance?

**JP:** I am interested in gender balance in life and feel that ELT materials should reflect better the language used in real life and therefore society in general. As such, I feel the lack of any focus on this issue is problematic, hence the presentation I did, that you attended, at IATEFL

**TW:** Could you share with our readers the main points you made in your presentation?

**JP:** My presentation examined ELT coursebooks and how they do not focus at all on gender-neutral language. My presentation demonstrated that using “sexist” language, such as using the male pronouns to refer to both males and females, or gendered job titles, such as businessman to refer to a generic professional role, is a common occurrence with English-language learners even at higher levels. This is generally due, in my view, to the fact that many other languages have grammatical gender, which English does not, and so learners just import their language usage into English. My presentation discussed why coursebooks do not have any focus on this topic and then made suggestions as to how individual teachers can integrate this topic into their syllabus. I also presented some activities that I use in my teaching to foster awareness of this topic in my learners and to help them avoid the use of sexist language in their English.

**TW:** What is gender neutral or non-sexist language?

**JP:** Gender-neutral language is basically language that does not “mark” one sex from the other and uses neutral terms to refer to men and women when the sex of the person is not relevant or known. Therefore, ‘firefighter’ is gender neutral whereas ‘fireman’ is not, as the latter implies this job is always done by men.

**TW:** Can you give some examples of grammatical gender in other languages?

**JP:** I work in a predominantly German-speaking area of Italy and both Italian and German have grammatical gender. All nouns in these languages are categorized according to their grammatical gender; all nouns are masculine or feminine in Italian, but nouns in German can be masculine, feminine or neuter. For example, in German the word for milk is die Milch (feminine) whereas in Italian it is il latte (masculine). Grammatical gender has nothing to do with biological sex as inanimate objects also have grammatical gender as we have seen.

**TW:** Why do you think coursebooks fail to focus on this?

**JP:** I don’t know – it’s a good question. Maybe coursebook writers and publishers don’t think it’s important. But we know that using gender-neutral language and avoiding sexist language are issues in every-day English. Anyway, I am fully aware that materials can’t do everything for everyone, which is why I suggested in my talk that teachers should be more aware of this aspect of language and devise and integrate their own activities into their classroom practices and materials to address this lack of focus.

**TW:** Can you give some examples of the way you do this in your own language teaching?

**JP:** One activity I have used in the past with my advanced learners is to provide them with example sentences such as the ones just below and ask them to discuss the situations implied. I don’t draw their attention to the gendered language. Of course teachers could use a variety of different words to refer to the people in the situations, to people in general – including the word “person”. But once they have discussed the situations, inevitably using the generic male pronouns, we discuss why this was and what it means to use male pronouns when referring to professions and people in general.

This is an activity adapted from Adrian Wallwork’s 1997 book *Discussions A-Z Advanced*. (Cambridge: CUP)

o A manager realises an employee is stealing from the company. How should the manager deal with this situation?

• A pedestrian sees a cyclist involved in a road accident. What should the pedestrian do?

**TW:** Could you say a bit about why you think it is important to have gender neutral language? Is it only because usage is changing or is there a moral/political/social question here?

**JP:** Gender neutral language is important because it is fair – it mitigates the male-focus that has traditionally dominated society and thus makes it clear that, for example, both men and women can be doctors, firefighters, and police officers for example, their sex making no difference to their ability to do their jobs. So the use of gender neutral language in many ways is a product of changing trends and attitudes in society; the more women go out to work and take up positions of responsibility in society, the more we need appropriate words to represent this. However, language is also a huge influence on how we think and interact; the more we use gender neutral terms, the more likely it is that we won’t assume every time someone refers to a business executive, this person is a man.

**TW:** Ok, then after the activity above what do you do?

**JP:** After you have done an activity like this with language students, it’s important to teach learners how to avoid the use of the generic “he” and “his” in such situations. And so I elicit ways they can do this. Most simply they can put the nouns into the plural and qualify them with the plural pronouns “they”, “them” etc. What I also do now is teach the singular “they”, i.e. “I think the manager should talk to the employee and ask them why they stole what they did”. This usage is now common in informal English and is becoming more and more acceptable in more formal styles of English.

**TW:** In your experience, are students generally accepting of this area of language change?

**JP:** Yes, I think so. I generally have students who have German or Italian as their first language, which as I have mentioned have grammatical gender. So although they may not realise that saying “A doctor should know how to deal with his patients” isn’t really acceptable, once it has been pointed out and discussed, most seem keen to address the issue and try to avoid future “sexist” usage. I must admit I have had some interesting conversations with some of my Italian students who feel the topic is irrelevant and can’t really understand what all the fuss is about. But by discussing the whole topic of sexism in society and the unequal treatment of women, which is much more pronounced in Italy than in other European countries, most realise it is a valuable topic and eventually accept this area of language change.

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# Teacher Trainer

## Sending in?

Would you like to send something in to *The Teacher Trainer*?

If you have an idea that is useful, relevant and interesting to teacher trainers, teacher educators and teacher mentors, why not write it up for us? If you are not familiar with our content or style, read an issue or three of the journal and also go on our web site to read examples of articles that have appeared in our pages.

### Our readers

Our subscribers and readers are all over the world. Some have English as their first language. Many do not. They may be trainers of pre-service or in-service teachers and they work in many different settings. This is why a clear structure and clear language are very important in a first draft article. We are not overly academic. Even thoughtful pieces will keep the number of bibliographical references to under ten. And these pieces will contain a section on how the thoughts can be implemented or made to come alive to readers in their own settings

### Timing

*The Teacher Trainer* comes out three times a year, but for contributors there are no deadlines as such so there is no need to worry about timing. Articles are printed once they are ready and after they have queued up for a while. There are no special issues, but there are specialised series running in most issues. Examples of these are "News in Our Field", "Practical Training Session", "Observation and Feedback" and 'Interview'.

### First draft

So, if you would like to send us an article, please write in an accessible, non-academic style. Length should normally be 800-4,000 words. Send your first draft in double spaced with broad margins. Use headings and sub-headings throughout to make your text easier to follow. Please give a brief bio data and an accurate word count at the end. Make sure your name and contact details appear in both your article and your accompanying email in case the two get separated. Don't send your article to other publications at the same time as you are sending it to us as we will then not consider it.

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We do sometimes turn articles down. This is usually for one of the following reasons:

- The article is for language students or language teachers not for our readership of teacher trainers, teacher educators and teacher mentors.
- The article is too similar to one already published or about to be published in the journal.
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- The article is too long for our few pages.
- The article is very academic in style.
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But wherever possible the editor will work with you to get your ideas in print. She is part-time so there may be delays when she is teaching or training and thus not working on articles for a few weeks.

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When we are laying out a new issue of the *Teacher Trainer* journal, we often have a little space left over. We keep that for extra adverts that come in late. These little spaces are also perfect for short articles! So, if you have a really good idea that you want to share with fellow professionals, and it is very short (under 1,000 words), send it in! It may well help us with our layout. It may also mean that your work gets printed quicker than usual too!

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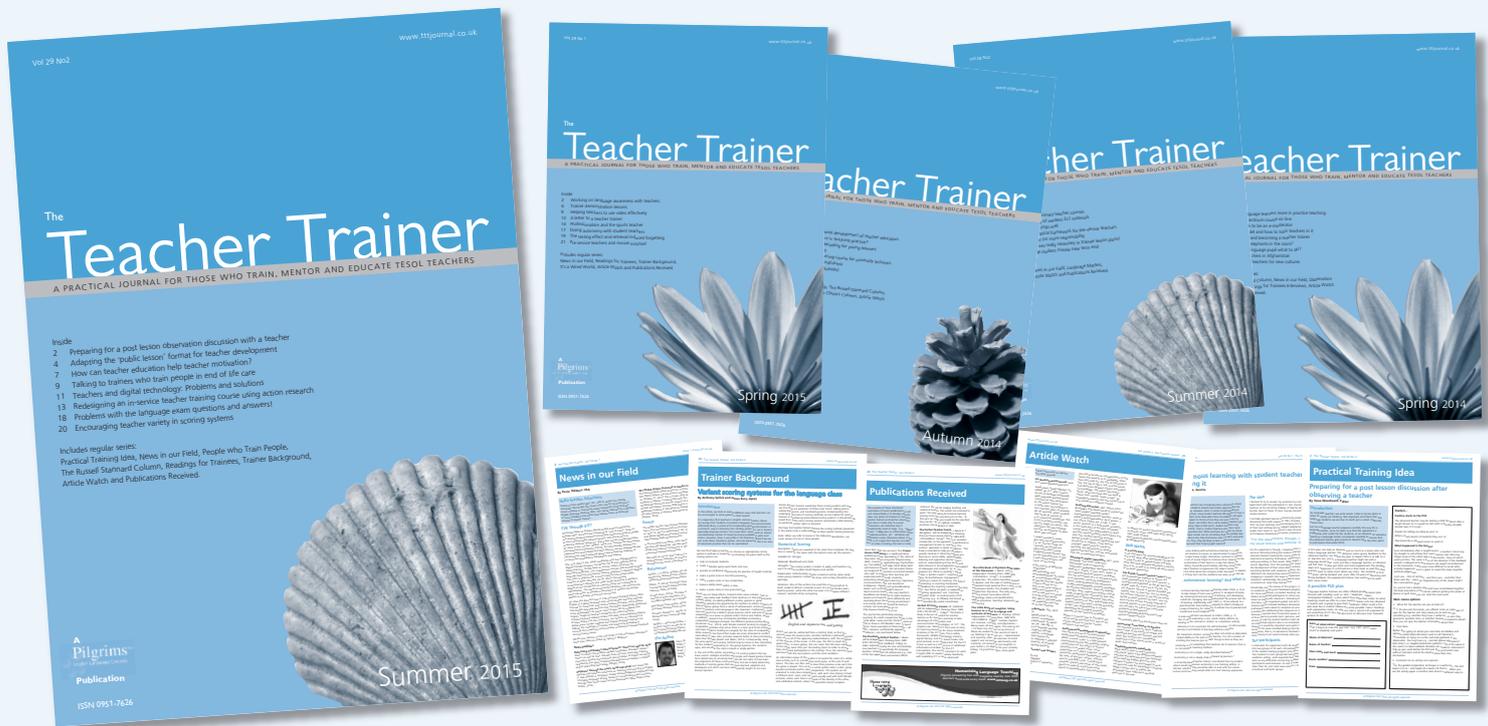
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# Trainer Background

## Do you believe in 'neuromyths'?

By Carol Lethaby, USA and Patricia Harries, Canada

### A Quiz

Before you go any further, you might want to try the quiz below. Read the statements and say whether you agree or disagree with them (or you can say 'don't know').

- 1 **We mostly only use 10% of our brain.**
- 2 **Individual learners show preferences for the mode in which they receive information (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).**
- 3 **Vigorous exercise can improve mental function.**
- 4 **Learning problems associated with developmental differences in brain function cannot be remediated by education.**
- 5 **Differences in hemispheric dominance (left brain, right brain) can help explain individual differences amongst learners.**
- 6 **Short bouts of co-ordination exercises can improve integration of left and right hemispheric brain function.**
- 7 **Individuals learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).**
- 8 **Teaching to learning styles is more important in language learning than in other types of learning.**
- 9 **Extended rehearsal of some mental processes can change the shape and structure of some parts of the brain**

These statements were part of a survey completed by 128 EL teachers in Canada and the USA in 2015. They are based on research by Paul Howard-Jones and his colleagues at the University of Bristol, UK and formed part of a larger study designed to see whether the beliefs teachers have about the brain and how it works are in fact correct or whether teachers believe in so-called 'neuromyths' (ideas about the brain that neuroscientists consider to be false).

### Discussion of the quiz statements

Let's take a look at the statements above and what neuroscience says about them:

#### 1 We mostly only use 10% of our brain.

**False:** This is an extremely pervasive neuromyth and has even been featured in a recent movie ('Lucy' from 2015). We do in fact use 100% of our brain. This has been verified by brain scans of healthy brains as well as studies done on people who have brain damage or who have lost limbs, studies which show the ability of the brain to adapt to damage and make use of unused brain matter (Jarrett, 2015).

Pervasive indeed! We found that 30% of the teachers in the study that we conducted believed in this neuromyth.

#### 2 Individual learners show preferences for the mode in which they receive information (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).

**True:** Learners do express preferences about how they like to learn, but they often get it wrong about how they think they learn best. Krätzig and Arbuthnott (2006) asked learners to identify their own preferred learning style and then used a standardized questionnaire to assess the learner's preferred style. They found less than 50% agreement between the self-report and the questionnaire.

In our study, ninety-one per cent of the teachers agreed with this statement. Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (VAK) learning preferences seem to have become a well-established idea in English language teaching.

#### 3 Vigorous exercise can improve mental function.

**True:** Studies have proposed that the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory are greater in volume in people who exercise when compared with those people who don't. In addition, neuroscientists have known for many years that 'brain-derived neurotrophic factor' (BDNF) is released during aerobic exercise and this stimulates the growth of new neurons.

Eighty-three per cent of our survey respondents agreed with this statement.

#### 4 Learning problems associated with developmental differences in brain function cannot be remediated by education.

**False:** This is a very important one for teachers. Cognitive neuroscience today "emphasise[s] the complexity of interrelation between biological systems and environments such as those provided by education, and highlight the enduring possibility of mitigation." In other words, teaching *does* make a difference! (Howard-Jones et al, 2009)

In our survey it was heartening that only 6% agreed with this statement, but that's still eight teachers who believe that brain differences are innate and aren't affected by education. Added to this, thirty-one of our teachers responded 'Don't know' to this statement.

#### 5 Differences in hemispheric dominance (left-brain, right-brain) can help explain individual differences amongst learners.

**False:** The idea that each hemisphere has a distinct and separate function i.e. the left hemisphere is for language and logical, analytical thinking and the right hemisphere for creativity, is not supported by neuroscientists. Various studies have shown that both hemispheres are used for processing both logical and creative tasks and a recent study of over a thousand people has shown that there is no evidence that some people have better connected or more dominant left or right brain networks (Jarrett, 2015). Categorising learners as either left or right brained, and focusing teaching on developing one hemisphere over another are not considered to be useful educational methods (Holmes, 2016).

This is another very common myth and sixty-six per cent of the teachers in our survey agreed with this statement.

#### 6 Short bouts of co-ordination exercises can improve integration of left and right hemispheric brain function.

**False:** The belief that the two hemispheres of the brain are highly specialized and that learners learn in different ways according to whether one hemisphere dominates over another has led educators to seek interventions to improve learning. One theory from the 1930s which stated that reading problems were caused by an overly-dominant right hemisphere appears to have influenced a body of opinion (realized by a program called 'Brain Gym') that believes exercise can alter any so-called imbalance between the right and left hemispheres of the brain (Jarrett, 2015). However, this idea has no support in scientific reviews.

Similar to statement 6, sixty-two per cent of the teachers surveyed agreed with this statement.

### 7 Individuals learn better when they receive information in their preferred learning style (e.g. visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).

**False:** This is considered to be “perhaps the most popular and influential myth” by Howard-Jones (2014) and to have achieved urban legend status in educational psychology (Lilienfeld in Hattie and Yates, 2015). The idea that learning is enhanced if learners are taught according to their preferred learning style, referred to as the meshing hypothesis by Pashler et al (2009), lacks supporting evidence and two studies in particular refute it. Krätzig and Arbuthnott (2006) found that learners learnt no better when tested using their preferred learning style (visual, auditory or kinaesthetic). Rogowsky et al (2015) examined the meshing hypothesis directly and the results showed no significant relationship between students’ preferred learning styles, the teaching mode and test results.

Eighty-eight per cent of the survey participants agreed with this statement, showing what a firm hold it has on our profession.

### 8 Teaching to learning styles is more important in language learning than in other types of learning.

**False:** This was a statement that was not part of the original statements by Howard-Jones and his team, but was added to our study to find out whether EL teachers consider learning styles to be particularly relevant to language teaching.

In our study only 22% agreed with this, but this probably goes to show how important teachers think learning styles are to education in general, not specifically to language teaching.

### 9 Extended rehearsal of some mental processes can change the shape and structure of some parts of the brain

**True:** Good news! The brain’s plasticity means that “thinking, learning and sensing can all change neural structure directly” (Fine, 2010: 177). Two well-known studies document this. In one study, (Draganski et al, 2004), the brains of volunteers who have learned to juggle were examined over three time periods using sophisticated brain imaging techniques. The brains showed temporary and structural change in areas connected with the processing and storage of complex visual motion. In 2000, Maguire et al looked at brain scans of London taxi drivers and observed that the structure of the brain changed as a result of the particular spatial navigation demands of the job.

Seventy per cent of the survey participants agreed with this statement – good news for teaching – practice does seem to make a difference.

## How did you do?

So, how did you do? Which of the neuromyths did you agree with?

The point of our study was to show how many EL teachers believe in these widely dispersed myths and to consider the part that teacher trainers and educators play in propagating and perpetuating the myths.

To read the complete article\* about our study and the studies that ours was based on, please see the references below. You might also like to take a look at Russ Mayne’s 2012 article from Modern English Teacher.

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# Encouraging teachers to develop their own materials for writing classes

By Martin Duguay, South Korea

## Introduction

I work in a Department of English Language Education, in a university in South Korea. My students are pursuing a bachelor's degree in English Education as they are future middle school/high school English teachers. Some of them already work part time as English tutors for middle/high school students and as teachers or teaching assistants in private English language centers (called *hagwon*). This means they can readily implement ideas from our courses into their practical teaching. From time to time I also teach a graduate writing course in our Master's degree program. Some of these students are already teaching in public schools and private language centers while others do not have a degree in education but are pursuing the Master's degree with the goal of becoming public school teachers. In brief then, I run English language writing classes for both pre and in-service English language teachers.

I teach my undergraduate students over two semesters. This enables me to teach quite a few different genres. One of the reasons for teaching different genres is that these exemplify activities they could do with their own language students later on, with the understanding that they would need to modify these activities as needed. Another reason is that in order for South Korean students to become public school teachers they need to pass the national teacher's employment exam. The questions on the writing section of the exam vary from year to year. They could be asked to write a critique, analyze a poem, write a persuasive paragraph/essay and so on. I like to teach creative writing too as I believe that this mixed-bag approach can be effective in developing their writing skills.

I do work on form with my students, but I am also concerned with other aspects such as organization, support/development of ideas, logic, and the like. My students have a tendency to focus on form at the detriment of other aspects of writing. I feel it is important to teach them about the various elements they need to be aware of in order for them to be able to give their future students appropriate feedback on their writing. As a result, I encourage them to be critical and analytical when reading various writing samples. The same goes for peer editing activities as I give them specific checklists to help them apply the various skills they develop along the way.

Regarding the genres of writing I work on, these include short stories, mini sagas, poetry such as haiku, poems to describe a place/meaningful object, rhyme and word association poems, anecdotes, mock interviews, descriptive paragraphs, movie/book reviews, autobiographical essays, and persuasive writing.

## Using a writing text book or "textbook-free" courses

When designing a writing class for teachers in training, or indeed for any language students, trainers will likely select a textbook that best meets the needs of their students for the course in question. Although many course leaders may prefer to use textbooks to teach writing, I have come to realize that teaching a writing class using my own materials can be most beneficial to my students.

Some teachers and teacher trainers may wonder why I would encourage them to write their own materials when there is an abundance of ESL/EFL writing books on the market. One obvious reason to me as a writing teacher is that I find it difficult to select a book which supports all or even most of the learning objectives of my course. In general, the texts do not include all the genres I wish

to include, and the compositions are not always of interest to my students. Regardless of the book I choose, I will need to supplement it with my own materials. This has led me over the years to write various compositions and exercises to teach writing to university level student teachers.

## Rationale for writing your own materials

There is support from the research literature to encourage foreign language teachers to write some if not all of their teaching materials. Ansary and Babaii (2002) discuss the pros and cons associated with the use of ESL/EFL textbooks, and they point out that there may be a need to supplement a text with other materials because "no textbook is perfect". At the very least, this suggests that course leaders could develop some of their own teaching materials. A more recent article by Tomlinson (2012) describes cases where teachers have taught various courses without the use of a textbook. Although Tomlinson believes that both teachers and students benefit from the use of textbooks and enjoy using them, he states that creative teachers can develop meaningful "textbook-free" courses by meeting the students' specific language needs. Continuing with the point of the learners' needs, Jolly and Bolitho (2011) argue that teachers know their students best, and they are therefore in an ideal position to develop materials for their own classes. The authors add that the process of developing materials allows teachers to "teach themselves" as they need to incorporate various elements related to language teaching in order to create materials. Last but not least, Jolly and Bolitho regard materials development as a worthwhile professional development activity for language teachers and thus, implicitly, for teacher trainers too.

Writing one's own materials to teach a foreign language, and at pre or in-service level may seem like a daunting endeavour at first. Let me reassure you though that it is well worth the effort. To begin with, course leaders can ensure that the texts used in class are comprehensible, meaningful, and culturally appropriate by writing their own. For example, we could write poems and short stories for a creative writing unit and use these as teaching/training materials. We should not worry about writing masterpieces. I am not suggesting that we use poorly written compositions with our student teachers, but there is no need to attempt to emulate the likes of Margaret Atwood or Ernest Hemingway. As a matter of fact, when I use one of my own compositions in my lessons, I invite my students to share their reactions to the piece of writing in small groups and to discuss how the composition could be improved by referring to a list of guidelines created specifically for this activity. These discussions are rather lively and provide some insight regarding my student teachers' comprehension of the piece of writing as well as their understanding of the stylistic points for the particular genre studied. (Please see appendix for a short example text)

I believe that this activity helps to lower my student teachers' anxiety about sharing their own compositions with their classmates as they can gain an appreciation of the benefits of shared reading and peer editing. We should not forget the significant role that a low affective filter can play in acquiring a second or foreign language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Yet another reason for leaders of writing classes to write their own materials is to experience the writing process that the students will need to perform. It may be a simple, if not routine, task to give a class instructions on how to write a specific genre, whether this is a short text to exemplify a grammar point or a story to accompany a picture composition, but it is another matter altogether to take on the role of student teacher and actually complete the same task.

By experiencing this process first hand, class leaders can be better equipped to help their students achieve the goals of the lesson as they will be able to anticipate possible problem areas.

From experience, I have observed that my student teachers enjoy reading my compositions just as much and perhaps even more than textbook readings although I am not an author by trade. The fact of the matter is that they appreciate the effort I put into the writing process. The texts I write become more meaningful to them because I have taken the time to write and share my work with them, just as they in turn are expected to write and share with others. In other words, my writing can be used to motivate my student teachers to create their own work.

## Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have encouraged teacher trainers and teachers to write their own texts for their writing classes. We may not feel inclined to create all the materials for a writing class, but we can certainly experiment by writing a few. Considering that we can spend hours looking for appropriate materials to supplement our textbooks, writing one's own materials could be perceived as a viable option for creative and motivated teachers and trainers who are well aware of their students' particular needs.

On a final note, one should not forget that EFL learners and student teachers may lack confidence in producing pieces of writing and that reading their teacher's compositions could be a source of inspiration. What could be more meaningful to students than their own teacher taking the time to write for them?

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## Appendix

Here is an example of a true story text I wrote myself.

### Logical Connectors: Adverbials and Conjunctions

Fill in each blank with the correct expression. Note that you can only use each expression once.

as soon as, when, during, while, after, and, so, but, because, since

The story you are about to read took place \_\_\_\_\_ my childhood. To be exact, these events occurred \_\_\_\_\_ I was eleven years old.

I had a doctor's appointment that morning to get my weekly allergy shot. Yes, I was one of those poor kids who sneezed all the time. As you can see, not much has changed \_\_\_\_\_ then. At any rate, I was riding my bike against the flow of traffic although I knew better. As I came up to an intersection, I heard the loud screech of tires coming from the left. \_\_\_\_\_ I turned my head to the left to see the car, I felt an overwhelming surge of pain in my lower left leg and I was propelled to the ground. I tried to stand up, \_\_\_\_\_ I fell back down \_\_\_\_\_ of the intense pain in my leg.

At that exact moment, two kind ladies came rushing out of their house \_\_\_\_\_ caught me before I was about to hit my head on the pavement. Not only was my leg killing me, but I was also feeling rather dizzy. As my head was spinning round and round, the two elderly ladies asked me for my phone number \_\_\_\_\_ they could call my parents. I had a tough time remembering my name let alone my phone number. \_\_\_\_\_ a minute or two, I finally remembered my phone number and gave it to the ladies. \_\_\_\_\_ the ladies were asking me all sorts of questions, the driver of the car was pacing back and forth rather nervously and impatiently.

(To be continued...)

## Student reactions

An interesting point that comes up through discussion following the completion of the text above is that although most of my students will fill in the blanks correctly, they do not necessarily use these expressions correctly in their own compositions. This allows them to realize that some grammar points may not fully be acquired by students even though they seem to display evidence of having mastered these structures. Thus they discover that we need to use grammar exercises wisely with an understanding that learning does not necessarily equal acquisition in terms of what students can produce. For example, some of my students struggle to use 'during/while' correctly although they know the grammar rule.

Other interesting student reactions are related directly to the story itself. Students are interested in finding out more details about various aspects of the story as well as the ending, which is revealed to them in another activity. Naturally, this can be an ideal opportunity for teachers to ask their students to create an ending to the story so as to work on creative writing skills. At any rate, this exemplifies the power of storytelling as championed by Mario Rinvolucri. (Please see the following article on the *Teaching English* web site and/or his blog and keynote speech at the 'Using Drama in Language Learning' Workshop at SOAS, University on 13 November 2009" on Youtube at:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rDu5w4UFmA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rDu5w4UFmA)

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/story-telling-language-teachers-oldest-technique](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/story-telling-language-teachers-oldest-technique)

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/mario-rinvolucri](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/mario-rinvolucri)

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# Article Watch

Below are brief summaries of relevant articles from other journals.

**ETp.** (*English Teaching professional*). **Issue 105. July 2016.** www.etprofessional.com

'The PhD experience'. N Vu, E Edwards, S Lim & C K Mai, pp 51-53. If you're wondering whether doing a PhD is the right thing for you, you might like to read this account of what happens at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the process, including the highs and lows as seen by four travellers along the doctorate road.

**IATEFL Voices, 250. May-June 2015.** (*The main publication of IATEFL*) www.iatefl.org/newsletter/iatefl-voices-newsletter

'The more things change...' D. Crystal, p 11. David Crystal, the patron of IATEFL, introduces a special edition on language, drawing on archive material from 1977, 1993, 1998, and 2007. World English, the tension between maintaining intelligibility and maintaining identity, mutual respect for differences in variety of English, corpora of international data, and teacher best practice – all themes that have arisen and are still relevant to today.

**Language Issues** (The journal of NATECLA), **26/2. Winter 2015.**

'What works and what doesn't in English language teaching'. R Mayne, pp 4-6.

How do we know what works in ELT? Where does our knowledge of 'best practice' come from? Can we trust experience and expertise or should we take a closer look at research before we know how to train others? This article summarises the main points of the author's talk given at the NATECLA 2015 National Conference.

**Language Teaching Research, 20/4, 2016.** ltr.sagepubl.com.

'Anniversary article. Interactional feedback in second language teaching: A synthesis and analysis of current research'. H Nassaji, pp 535-562. The role of interactional feedback has long been of interest to L2 acquisition researchers and teachers.

This article provides a synthesis and analysis of recent research and developments in the area. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications for classroom instruction.

**Modern English Teacher, 25/2, Jan 2016.** www.onlinemet.com

'Digital teachers' rooms-Using online platforms to enhance physical space'. R. Aylett, pp. 53-56. With the rise of online, blended, and mobile learning, do our multi-purpose physical staffrooms need to change? As they are one of the most important but overlooked spaces in a teacher's professional development, the author reports on three projects that brought about digital renovation to staffrooms in Egypt. No paint or decorating required! Padlet wall artwork, digital teacups, reasons and challenges...all explained clearly!

**Teaching and Teacher Education, 2016.** www.elsevier.com

**Vol. 57, July.** 'Teachers as leaders: Pre-service teachers' aspirations and motivations'. T Reeves & R Lowenhaupt, pp 176-187. Teacher attrition is a problem facing education systems worldwide. Today's teachers often view teaching as a short term endeavour and desire influence beyond the classroom. This study explores the issue in relation to USA pre-service teachers. Findings indicate that even before officially entering the classroom, many teachers expect to take on leadership roles that keep them *partly* in the classroom.

**Vol. 58, Aug.** 'Extending experiential learning in teacher professional development'. C Girvan, C Conneely, & B Tangney, pp 129-139. This research explores the implementation of an experiential approach to new pedagogy with teachers in Irish secondary schools. Teachers' self-reflections, observations, and interviews demonstrate that meaningful changes in classroom practice result.

**Teaching in Higher Education, 21/5, July 2016.** www.tandf.co.uk/journals

'Field experiences in teacher education: The perceptions and qualities of written reflections'. M Ulusoy, pp 532-544.



The author analysed and classified the qualities of 2,400 journal entries written by 75 pre-service teachers (PSTs). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all those on their field experience. The largest proportion of written entries were found to be 'technical'. As only a few were 'transformational', the author concludes that PSTs need additional knowledge, practice, and support for reflection and reflective writing.

## Webzines section

**www.elted.net** Vol 19, 2016.

There are several articles of interest in this, the latest volume, including:

'Task based learning in language teacher education'. B Littlewood.

'Using awareness raising activities on initial teacher training courses to tackle "native speakerism"'. M Kiczowski, D Baines & K Krummenacher.

**Professional Development in Education, 42/4, 2016.**

Two articles may be of particular interest:

'The professional path to become a teacher educator: The experience of Chilean teacher educators'. H M Maggio.

'What role do teaching mentors play in supporting new university lecturers to develop their teaching practice?'. R Turner et al.



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# Publications Received

The purpose of these thumbnail summaries of recent publications in ELT and related fields is to broadly indicate topic and points of interest to mentors, teacher trainers and teacher educators. Print size is noted only if unusual. Dimensions are indicated only if exceptionally small or large; E.g., 148pp+ means "148pp plus an informative roman numbered preface, etc". All books are paperback unless otherwise stated. If the book is of a type that requires an index but an index is lacking, the lack is noted.

**Teacher Education in Times of Change: Responding to Challenges across the UK and Ireland.** *The Teacher Education Group (Beauchamp et al.) (2016). ISBN 978-1-4473-1854-5; 291pp+.* There are 13 chapters by eleven contributors working in institutions, mostly universities, in Britain or Northern Ireland. The three main sections of the book are on: context and methods, teacher education policy, and critical issues. The Republic of Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland each have a chapter all to themselves. Topics in teacher education (TE) that are addressed in these and some of the other chapters include: comparative and historical approaches in analysis of TE policy, standards and accountability, the place of research, TE and higher education, and partnership in (TE). Concerned with mainstream (especially state) educational institutions. There is no prominent discussion of language teacher education/training in particular; indeed the index includes no entry for 'language', 'modern language', 'language teacher education', or anything similar that I can see. Overall, the book addresses the question: "Why is teacher education policy significant—politically, sociologically, and educationally?" (Back cover blurb). In that respect and with particular regard to the British Isles, it is impressively informative.

**Trainer Development.** *T. Wright & R. Bolitho. (2007). Publisher: www.lulu.com; ID: 554846, ISBN 978-1-84753-232-9; 254pp; no index.* The 12 chapters are: Inside

a training course, 1; A framework for training; Working with groups in training; Working with participants' experience; New & shared experiences in training; The awareness-raising process & its consequences; Talk in training courses; Creating meaning: new learning; Planning for action; Feedback, assessment, & evaluation in training; Inside a training course, 2; Developing as a trainer. Theoretical foundations are clearly outlined (e.g., Kolb's work on learning cycles is referred to). This book stands out, however, as a source of insight about how to run language teacher training sessions and courses. Extremely practical. Recommended.

**Crafting the Feedback Teachers Need and Deserve: A Guide for Leaders.** *T. van Soelen. (2016.) Routledge; ISBN 978-1-138-95003-0; pp. 195+; no index.* The eight chapters are: Shining the light in the dark (e.g., organizing feedback on the quality of your own feedback); Why should we measure feedback quality?; Building your descriptive prowess; Using conditional language to ponder change\*; Why point of view is significant; Explicitly owning and raising assumptions; The trickiness of co-teaching situations; Nurturing a culture of feedback. About the asterisk (\*), van Soelen uses the word *conditional* not as a grammarian would but as a blanket term for tactful forms of words that nudge people to notice and ponder something like a possible gap in their way of teaching. Interesting and useful. Not specifically for trainers of language teachers.

**Teacher Education and Professional Development in TESOL: Global Perspectives.** *J. Crandall & M.A. Christison, eds. (2016). Routledge & The Int'l Research Foundation for English Language Education; ISBN 978-1-138-19013-9; 282+pp.* The 16 chapters (by 25 contributors from various countries and continents) are billed as presenting the results of recent empirical studies. The four main sections are: Teacher identity in second language (SL) teacher education (TEd) & professional development (PD) programs; SL TEd for diverse contexts;



PD programs for diverse contexts; and Preparing teachers for English-medium instruction (aka, CLIL). Among the chapters likely to be of particular interest to readers of this journal are: An introduction to TED and PD in TESOL, Teacher education & the development of teacher identity, ESOL teacher candidates' emotion & identity development, Building a sustainable community of inquiry through online TESOL PD, and Creating a PD program to support faculty in an English-medium university of science & technology.

**Your Teacher Training Handbook.** *J. McGrath & A. Coles. (2013). Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-13779-0; 282+pp; hardback but available as paperback; published first by Pearson (2011).* This is a book for teachers training to become teachers in the UK school system. There are two main parts: Managing your studies and Managing your placement (aka, practicum). There are chapters on time management, doing the reading, improving writing skills, building a teaching portfolio, planning and delivering a presentation, classroom management, lesson planning, teaching methods, learning theory, assessment, feedback, and finding a job. UK referenced. Much potential to be helpful.

continued >>>

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**Achieving your Diploma in Education and Training.** J. Gould & J. Roffey-Barentsen. (2014). Sage. ISBN 978-1-4462-8702-6; 393+pp. The 11 chapters include ones on a teacher's role & responsibilities; planning for teaching & learning; choosing & using; resources; assessing teaching & learning; strategies; managing learners; continuing professional development; curriculum development & design. Slightly UK referenced. Compared to the book reviewed just above, this one is less focused on coping with a teacher training course and much more focused on the content of such a course. Readable, informative, somewhat UK-referenced.

**Training to Teach: A Guide for Students,** 3rd edn. N. Denby, ed. (2015). Sage; ISBN 978-1-4739-0793-5; 402+pp. The 24 chapters (17 contributors) are in three main parts: Professional attributes, Strategies for teaching & learning, and Important issues & skills. Among the chapters are: Child protection issues, Communication & collaboration, Understanding the roles of specialist colleagues, Behaviour strategies in challenging classrooms, Creativity, Teaching pupils with English as an additional language, Understanding & using assessment & feedback, Cross-curricular planning issues, and Accessing & using statistical information. Readable, impressively comprehensive, somewhat UK-referenced.

Again the focus is on the goal of being a teacher in a national school system. Recommended.

**Full on Learning: Involve Me and I'll Understand.** Z. Elder. (2012) Crown House. ISBN 978-184590681-8. 307pp. In look and feel, this could be mistaken for a coffee table book on some artist or art movement, with its striking cover, arresting graphics inside, and thick, heavy paper. What it propounds, 'full on learning', is sketched as follows although some bits are omitted here: "Every teacher action can have a direct causal effect on the quality of the learning experience...As a result...everything we plan, do and say needs to be mindfully designed...We can [= should?] do everything in our power to deliberately and positively influence and involve learners in every aspect of the learning that we design" (p. 9). The rest of the book, then, is an elaboration of why full on learning is necessary and how a teacher can undertake the task of enabling it to occur. Attitudes, strategies, and tactics are recommended. This is not, however, a recipe book and so specific classroom procedures are not detailed.

**L. S. Vygotsky & Education.** L. Moll. (2014) Routledge. Key Ideas in Education series. ISBN 978-0-415-89949-9. 172pp; pocket-size. This extremely rich and readable small

introduction gives prominence to the concept of the mediation of thinking, which for Moll is the key to Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach to psychology. The chapters are: Situating Vygotsky historically; Reading in two languages: A formative experiment; Bilingual subjectivity in the mediation of thinking; and Living knowledge in practice.

**Authenticity In and Through Teaching in Higher Education: The transformative potential of the scholarship of teaching.** C. Kreber. (2013) Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-52008-9; 197pp+. Relates to teaching in a university & not specifically about language teaching. Drawing on social philosophy, the author proposes three perspectives on authenticity: the existential (which has to do with awareness of one's own "purposes and possibilities in life"), the critical (which includes recognition of "power relations that systematically distort our perceptions", & the communitarian (which involves recognition that authenticity requires acknowledgement of social inter-relatedness) (p. 11). Also much discussed is 'the scholarship of teaching', which is seen as "intimately bound up with becoming authentic" (p. 5). While authenticity is viewed as desirable for all, the book's ultimate concern is how students may be helped to develop towards authenticity. The style is academic. The print is rather small, although not extremely so.

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