Teacher Training and Education SIG newsletter

Spring 2018

Dear TTEdSIG Members,

I am delighted that the Teacher Training and Education SIG (TTEd SIG) in IATEFL is able to share our latest publication. Thank you to our newsletter editor, Jennifer Book and I wish her success in the coming years. We are thankful to her for encouraging scholars to send their articles to our newsletter and putting them all together for this issue. We would also like to thank the authors who contributed to this issue.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our long-term coordinator, Prof. Dr. Birsen Tütüniş, as well, and bid her farewell as she steps down as coordinator, which is a demanding job. She will continue to help us with our events organisations and I am sure we will benefit from her invaluable experience.

Having said that, I would like to introduce myself. I have been a TTEd SIG committee member since 2011 serving as the Events, Publicity and Membership officer. In order to ensure a smooth transition for our SIG until we have a new coordinator, I will be the acting coordinator. I have been an active member in our field as a teacher, trainer, and a teacher educator since 1994 having worked in several international contexts. I have an MSc in TESOL from Aston University, and recently completed my Doctorate in Education from the University of Liverpool.

I will be communicating with members shortly with several updates. I aim to contribute to IATEFL TTEd SIG, which serves the professional development and networking needs of English Language Teachers of Teachers (ToTs) around the world and contributes to the profession via publications, events and other initiatives aimed at fostering quality teacher education in English.

I would also like to call for contributions for our Winter 2018 issue, to contact Jennifer with submissions by 30th September 2018

Happy reading!

Sincerely yours,

Burcu Tezcan-Unal, EdD, SFHEA

Acting TTEdSIG Coordinator

Hello and welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of the TTEdSIG newsletter.

In this issue we have a varied range of articles for you to peruse on a topics including reading strategies, readers for young learners, teacher accreditation, growth mindset, and ethnicity in Ecuador, as well as two book reviews.

As ever, I willingly accept any offers of future articles, so please feel free to email me directly.

Here's wishing a successful and fruitful Spring and Summer to everyone!

Jennifer Book

IATEFL TTEdSIG newsletter editor

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The relationship of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies to achievement

Professor Dr. Birsen Tütüniş,

Dr. Carol Griffiths

The importance of metacognition in successful language learning (including management strategies such as planning, selecting, monitoring, reflecting and evaluating) has long been recognised. According to O'Malley et al. (1985), for instance, "students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction" (p.24). Anderson (2008) adds, "metacognition results in critical but healthy reflection and evaluation of thinking that may result in making specific changes in how learning is managed, and in the strategies chosen for this purpose" (p.99).

It is indeed not uncommon to find students with no direction in this age of technology where learners believe they can find all the answers to their queries with one click. Learners need guidance in their language learning process, especially on how to make use of metacognitive strategies in the development of language skills.

Reading is an important skill for students trying to develop a target language, and many text books emphasise the strategies learners can employ to engage cognitively with the text (such as highlighting, scanning, etc.). However, possibly not only cognitive strategies may be important, but also metacognitive awareness of strategies students might use to improve their performance.

Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) developed a questionnaire designed to measure students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (MARSI). The Inventory is divided into three sections: global, problem solving, and support strategies. Mokhtari and Reichard correlated the ratings with students' self-reported assessment of ability, and they found that students who rated themselves as excellent reported significantly higher rates of global and problem-solving strategies.

But we might ask what the relationship of the ratings to actual performance as assessed by test results is. In order to investigate this question, the MARSI was given to three classes of students studying in a university preparation school in Turkey. Five teachers volunteered to work with their students on metacognitive strategy awareness raising activities in their reading classes. The objectives were to raise awareness of learning strategies in general and to work on reading strategies explicitly, and the reading skills coursebook was chosen with this in mind. Three workshops were conducted with the teachers to discuss the theoretical and practical issues related to metacognitive awareness raising activities in language classes in general and reading classes in particular. The MARSI was given to the teachers and each item was discussed.

There were 25 pre-intermediate level (A2) students in each class, and they studied reading for 12 hours per week. Before the reading classes started, the MARSI was administered to the students in the three classes According to the results, two of the strategies received median ratings of 5 (I always or almost always do this): Item 12 (I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it), and Item 16 (When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading). Of these, Item 12 is labelled a support strategy, while Item 16 is labelled problem-solving.

After the end-of-semester tests, the MARSI ratings were correlated with the students' test results. According to the results, two of the strategies were significantly correlated with reading test results: Item 16 (When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading), and Item 30 (I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases). Both of these items are labelled as problem-solving strategies in the MARSI

The results of this small-scale and relatively short-term study would seem to suggest that metacognitive strategies are related to successful language course outcomes (in this case, reading skills). Since Item 16 was both given a high median rating by the students and significantly correlated with the final results, we might conclude that this supports the importance of paying attention (labelled a problem-solving strategy in the MARSI). This also supports the conclusion drawn by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) regarding the importance of problem-solving strategies. Further language programmes might usefully aim to raise students' awareness of metacognitive strategy options and to promote their use in the interests of promoting successful language development.

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Identifying Action Research Needs: A Report from Sweden

Joseph Siegel

Sweden's Ministry of Education recently promoted action research in an effort to improve classroom practices in all school subjects. In order to help direct such efforts and to incorporate teacher voices in influencing the direction of action research projects in the EFL field, an exploratory study with teachers at all levels of EFL education in Sweden was initiated. This paper summarizes the initial findings related to areas of EFL education in which teachers believe they need further support, thus providing a potential list of topics informed by practising teachers. These are topics that could be "problematized" (Burns, 2010) through action research. Teacher educators in other contexts may wish to conduct similar needs analyses of teachers on the frontlines. Specific areas of EFL resulting from the project that may be of interest in other contexts are highlighted and discussed.

Research Design

The first phase of the project was to circulate an online questionnaire eliciting teacher views on student performance and their own confidence in, and capacity for, teaching specific sub-skills of the four main language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Teachers ranked each item according to a 5-point Likert scale (very low, low, satisfactory, high, and very high). Many questionnaire items were influenced to a large extent by the Subject Syllabus for English (SSE), a national steering document created by the Ministry of Education that guides teachers at all levels, including compulsory school (ages 7-15) and optional upper secondary school (ages 16-19). Other questions focused on teacher background and experience. The questionnaire was followed up by interviews with interested teachers, where they were given the opportunity to expand on their survey answers. Thirty-seven teachers have replied to the online survey, and three teachers have participated in the follow-up interviews thus far.

Initial overall findings

To summarize, all teachers responded that they either closely or very closely followed the provisions in the SSE when planning and conducting classes. However, when it came to rating student performance and their own abilities to teach several of the specific criteria listed on the SSE, some areas were clearly lacking. In terms of listening, teachers find it difficult to teach students how to become familiar with a variety of accents, separate the speech stream into meaningful chunks to enhance comprehension, and understand implied meanings. For speaking, teachers report that they have a hard time teaching students to use communication strategies, to link ideas using conjunctions and transitions, and giving presentations. In reading, teachers struggle to help learners recognize textual details and generic features (e.g., register, word choice, rhetorical devices, etc.) and to distinguish fact from opinion. As with speaking, teachers find it challenging to help students link ideas when writing. In addition, teaching students to demonstrate cohesion in writing as well as effective strategies for proofreading are areas identified by these teachers in which they would like to improve their professional competence and confidence.

Syllabus descriptors

One major area of concern identified by several teachers was confusion caused by some of the performance descriptors listed in the SSE. Some of these descriptors contain multiple elements, and therefore it can be difficult for teachers to determine which to incorporate in a given lesson. In addition, some of the language used in the SSE is lengthy, ambiguous, and/or open to interpretation. Thus, it can be challenging for teachers to plan lessons and evaluate learner abilities in connection to certain descriptors.

For example, one component of the SSE for grades 7-9 states: "[students should develop knowledge of] language phenomena such as pronunciation, intonation, grammatical structures...words with different registers, as well as language expressions pupils will encounter in the language" (Skolverket, 2011, p. 35). Teachers would likely have to break down this lengthy and multi-faceted objective in order to address each individual component in class, and they struggle to put equal emphasize on each aspect. Moreover, vague descriptions like "different registers" may not be specific enough to inform material and activity choices.

Strategies

One of the key terms in the SSE is "strategy", which appears frequently in both the core content and knowledge requirements sections. However, the types of strategies that Swedish learners are supposed to develop are not specified. For example, in the SSE for grades 4-6, "pupils [must be able to] choose and apply a strategy for listening and reading" (Skolverket, 2011, p. 35). The term "strategy", however, has a variety of definitions and interpretations according to L2 pedagogic and research literature. O'Malley and Chamot (1990), for instance, have established a taxonomy of metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Since the term "strategy" is used rather loosely in the SSE, teachers are unsure of what is meant by "strategy". Thus, they struggle to confidently and knowingly incorporate strategies in their lessons and are unclear how strategy use can be assessed.

Notetaking

While many of the participants report being confident in teaching most aspects of the discrete language skills, when it comes to an integrated skill like notetaking, teachers are less confident and thus in need of further support. Teachers noted that they often lack pedagogic techniques for teaching learners how to take notes when listening or reading in their L2. There also seems to be uncertainty about whether the EFL teacher is meant to teach notetaking or whether this should be left to L1 classes, with an underlying and tenuous assumption that what is learned in L1 with regards to notetaking automatically transfers to the L2.

Mixed proficiencies and backgrounds

Sweden has seen major demographic changes in recent years due to a spike in immigration. As such, the "typical" EFL experience of native-born Swedes is no longer the norm. Students with varying academic and linguistic backgrounds are entering the school system at all levels. Some of these newly arrived students have varying experiences of EFL learning. At one end of the spectrum are learners who are highly proficient and may use English at home. At the opposite end are learners who have never studied EFL before and may not be able to read the English alphabet. Yet these learners could be placed in standard EFL classes alongside native-born Swedes who have received a "standard" EFL education, as defined by the Ministry of Education. Teachers, therefore, have been struggling with how to accommodate EFL learners with this range of academic and linguistic backgrounds.

Ways Forward

The type of investigation summarized in this report can help teacher educators to direct their efforts to areas of need as determined by practising teachers, which is preferable to making assumptions about what teachers need. Some of these areas of concern may apply to other contexts that use top-down standardized steering documents and that have experienced demographic changes. A potential solution to many of these issues is to hold workshops with practising teachers, L2 researchers, assessment specialists, and Ministry of Education representatives, where the problem issues can be dissected and discussed. In addition, once the issues are more fully understood and potential plans for improvement are developed, these interventions can be organized via the four step action research cycle (i.e., plan, act, observe, reflect) (e.g., Burns, 2010; Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014).

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Teacher Education for International Accreditation

Leonardo A. Mercado

For language teaching institutions, the pursuit of an international accreditation represents a monumental effort to enact transformational change in the hope of achieving the highest standards in the field for a diverse range of key organizational activities. Perhaps the most important and challenging among them is ensuring that all teachers have the professional background and level of expertise to become effective promoters of quality language learning. Moreover, accrediting agencies consider the qualifications and efficacy of the teaching staff to be of prime importance when evaluating institutions. Therefore, having a successful teacher education program can be crucial for any institution that aspires to become a world-class organization through an international accreditation.

The key to a successful accreditation strategy is making certain that the teacher education program addresses different needs and expectations depending on a teacher's stage of employment and level of experience. Pre-service training provides new hires with the knowledge and tools they need to put the institution's educational philosophy into practice, comply with academic policies, and adapt to what will probably be a very difficult first month. Teachers in their first year of employment are likely to face the greatest number of challenges as they immerse themselves in a new working environment. Therefore, teacher support systems in the form of professional learning communities (PLCs), ongoing counselling from coordinators, and formative class observations are likely to stem their anxiety and reduce turnover. In fact, a solid mentoring program for novice teachers is usually considered a 'must-have' by accrediting agencies. This is probably grounded in studies that show novice teachers often view mentoring favourably as an important means of support, with benefits for both the mentee and the mentor (Mercado & Mann, 2014). Those who have been at the institution for more than 2 years are fully adapted and more experienced, so their needs are perhaps best addressed through alternatives that offer them a sense of choice. With guidance and support, they can be allowed to create their own professional development plan provided they can demonstrate they are growing professionally.

A strong teacher education program will be comprehensive and multi-tiered. To promote a greater understanding of the teaching and learning process, it should include professional reading and research-based projects, followed by assessments of their knowledge and their ability to apply what they have learned to the classroom. Teachers also need to develop their methodological expertise. This can be achieved through hands-on workshops, formative class observations, and reflective teaching practices. Self-observation, for example, is a powerful alternative that enhances a teacher's awareness as to what takes place in the classroom and why it is happening, so "they are in a better position to articulate their needs and to determine the actions that are most likely to lead to improvement in their instructional practice" (Mercado & Baecher, 2014, p.65). In the end, teachers should have a selection of alternatives to choose from and the convenience of being able to accommodate the time allotted to their professional development within their busy lives.

To account for 21st century technology and life skills, autonomous learning should be encouraged through digital resources as well as online courses that are practical and supported by class videos. E-portfolios are another option that can get teachers to demonstrate self-directed learning and greater awareness of their accomplishments. Overall, technology should support professional development by making content for learning more accessible, supporting communication and networking in PLCs, and promoting self-assessment and reflection (Mercado, 2017).

Language program administrators (LPAs) face a unique challenge. They are expected to encourage teachers to partake in professional development. Yet, they are also required to evaluate them, creating what may at times seem like a potentially antagonistic relationship. An institution can overcome this by having some LPAs that are dedicated exclusively to teacher education. The "Professional Development (PD) Coordinator" can then be seen as a colleague and mentor rather than an evaluator. In such a role, teachers must have the opportunity to approach their academic counsellor at any time for questions or concerns they may have. An LPA must be able to offer teachers a wide variety of tools and resources for professional development and accompany them every step of the way as they explore new aspects of their teaching. International accreditation agencies will assess how well developed and consistent such support is as well as the degree to which teachers are satisfied with it.

Teachers also play a vital role in the accreditation process. They will be consulted by the accrediting agency's onsite inspection team about the teacher education program and how it helps them. Honest, truthful answers in favour of the program will leave a positive impression and serve to substantiate an institution's claims regarding its commitment to professional development and teacher training. Certainly, teachers will be asked questions about the teaching and learning process and their role in the classroom. However, they will also be consulted about the institution's mission and vision, academic policies, the curriculum, and other important matters. An effective teacher education program will provide them the information they need, as well as opportunities to discuss such issues with their peers and coordinators. Ultimately, teachers must demonstrate that they are not just well informed but that they have also embraced the notions of continuous improvement and lifelong learning.

After previously leading a successful bid for accreditation from the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) and as I direct a new process with Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), I can say that it is not possible to obtain an international accreditation without a compelling teacher education program. In settings where many teachers may not have a degree in education, an institution's professional development and teacher training efforts assume an even greater importance. Ultimately, the institution must prove to the accrediting agency that it has well-prepared, qualified teachers who can make well-informed decisions in the classroom and lead successful learning processes. With time and dedication, it is possible to be the among the best at serving teachers and making them top-notch ELT professionals, much as one would expect from a truly world-class organization.

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Originally from New York City, **Leo Mercado** has been in the field for almost 25 years, working as a teacher, program director, project manager, and educational technology specialist. As an author or co-author, he has more than 20 publications and presents regularly at international conferences, including IATEFL and TESOL International. He has led a successful accreditation process with the CEA and is now directing efforts in pursuit of another one with EAQUALS.

Understanding and embracing ethnic diversity in the classroom setting

Diego P. Ortega

In Ecuador, there are three major ethnic backgrounds—mestizos (mixed Amerindian and Spanish), indigenous people consisting of 12 distinct communities, and Afro Ecuadorians. Today's Ecuadorian teachers face a big challenge due to the fact that access to education must be granted to every child regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status andphysical condition, to mention but a few. In the near future more Ecuadorian classrooms in the public educational sector will, for instance, consist of mestizos, otavaleños, and peasant students as well as students from the Amazon region and Esmeraldas. This may be surprising and unexpected for novice teachers who experienced a classroom comprising mainly mestizos when they were students.

The Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) from Ecuador highlighted that the country's population as a comprises: Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and Spanish) 71.9%, Montubio (mixed heritage of Spanish, Indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian culture) 7.4%, Afro-Ecuadorians 7.2%, Indigenous (Amerindian) 7.0%, Spanish and Other 6.5%. This information helps us gain a better understanding of what a classroom may look like in some parts of Ecuador. This, in turn, requires teachers to be aware of their responsibility in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to better instruct their students of different ethnic groups and to take an active role towards promoting tolerance and respect for ethnicity among their pupils.

An important concern, generated by the above-mentioned information, lies in the notion of how novice language teachers in Ecuador can be better prepared to face this growing reality as they start their teaching careers. Facing this challenge is not an easy task, since there is not a wide range of subjects that focuses on the preparation of in-service (English) teachers with regards to better understanding and celebrating ethnicity during their language classroom instruction.

With these ideas in mind, the aim of this paper is to present a brief review of literature on the topic of different ethnic backgrounds presented in the classroom setting and specific activities aimed at valuing ethnicity and portraying it positively during the course of language classroom instruction. In so doing, it is expected that English teachers will incorporate into their lessons activities that promote understanding, tolerance, and respect towards ethnic groups within the Ecuadorian educational system.

Defining Ethnicity and Ethnic Group

First and foremost, for the purpose of this paper it is worth defining ethnicity. Garcia (2011:15) stated, "Ethnicity refers to a person's identity with a certain group of people (*ethnos* is Greek for people). This identity includes an emotional and intellectual allegiance to that group - a sense of peoplehood and of identifying and belonging to some particular human group." In order to have a complete picture of the concept under examination, it is imperative to know the thoughts noted by Wallman (1979:55 as cited in Gillborn, 1990) who said that ethnicity refers to the "*sense* of difference which can occur where members of a particular [ethnic] group interact with non-members. *Real* differences between groups of people are no more (and no less) than *potential* identity markers for the members of those groups."

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to look at the work of Banks (2006:79) who defined the concept of the ethnic group, as "a microcultural group with several distinguishing characteristics. An ethnic group is primarily an involuntary group, although identification with the group may be optional." The author went on to explain that an ethnic group shared many common features, including "values, experiences, behavioral characteristics, and linguistic traits that differ substantially from other ethnic groups within a society" (Banks, 2006:79). As said by Banks (2006), individuals achieve membership in their corresponding ethnic group by means of birth and early socialization rather than by their own choice. Gollnick and Chinn (2002:83) added the following ideas about ethnic and racial groups: "the uniqueness of an individual, a family, and sometimes a neighborhood can be identified as ethnic by an outsider. Children become aware of gender, race, [and] ethnicity . . . between the ages of two and five." Often skin colour and particular physical features are mostly associated with an individual's uniqueness (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). That is to say, having a good understanding of the topic under discussion is the first step that educators should take in order to be aware of the growing presence of ethnic groups in today's classroom settings in many parts of the world, including Ecuador.

Understanding Ethnicity from a Classroom Setting Perspective

In today's classrooms, one of the biggest challenges for educators is the rapid changing student population in terms of multi-ethnic groups taking part in the teaching and learning process. In addition to that, educators face challenges regarding the ethnicity of administrators, community members, and family members who are part of the aforementioned process as well (Howe & Lisi, 2014). According to Howe and Lisi (2014), teachers, students, administrators, community members and family members, all bring varied experiences to the teaching-learning process, such as "[different] cultural backgrounds, including a

diversity of experiences, values, beliefs, histories, languages, communication patterns, and needs" (Howe & Lisi, 2014:5). In this regard, it is key for teachers not only to know what ethnicity means but also to be aware of what is involved in teaching at schools where students of different ethnic groups come together. As reported previously, multi-ethnic students, along with other educational-process participants, differ in many key aspects, including values, beliefs, styles of dress, traditions, behavioral characteristics, linguistic traits, and more. In today's world, if teachers want to be better prepared to face the these challenges, they cannot overlook the key differences related to multi-ethnic students because of the impact these may have in the learning process of these students. Most importantly, teachers need to work towards a better understanding of the differences pertinent to each ethnic group as well as celebrating the presence of multi-ethnic groups at school.

In countries like Ecuador, where multiple ethnic groups attend the educational public system, there is a necessity to enable teachers to address this issue, both in their own classrooms and at the school-wide level. In this sense, Banks and McGee (2005:209) suggested an action requiring "the need for all teachers to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to work effectively with students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and language groups." By developing these, Ecuadorian teachers will be more likely to reach all their students and help them succeed at school and outside. Jackson (2007:1) claimed that "the biggest groups of ethnic minorities in Ecuador are the indigenous Amerindians and the Afro-Ecuadorians"

One of the advantages associated with the notion of having diverse ethnic classrooms was indicated by Juvonen, Nishina, and Sandra (2006). In their research study, Juvonen and colleagues (2006:398) concluded that "ethnic diversity is associated with feelings of safety and social satisfaction in school. Students felt safer, less harassed, and less lonely in more ethnically diverse contexts." Also, it indicated that power relations were more balanced in schools that had students of multi-ethnic groups than in schools with less ethnically diverse students.

Terenzini and colleagues (2001:528) claimed that their study findings recommended that "the level of racial/ethnic diversity in a classroom . . . increases [students'] problem-solving and group skills. . . . Medium levels of classroom diversity is the most supportive evidence for arguments that classroom diversity has positive, educational effects on student learning." Janmaat (2012) first commented that in today's educational entities the notion concerning the contribution to ethnic tolerance created by ethnically diverse classroom settings is largely recognised. Janmaat (2012) asserted that advocates of de-segregation will be pleased to hear that, on balance, [he] found more support for the contact than for the conflict perspective. For ethnic majority students in Germany and Sweden, the more diverse their classrooms were, the more tolerant were views on immigrants.

The findings of these research studies give us research-based evidence on the beneficial presence of students from ethnically diverse backgrounds in the classroom setting. The reported benefits may impact both students' academic lives and their lives beyond the school's boundaries. In the case of the Ecuadorian classroom, teachers should pay special attention to these three positive considerations drawn from the highlighted research studies:

1) in more ethnically diverse school settings, students feel safer and less lonely, and students experience feelings of safety and social satisfaction by being involved in this type of school context (Juvonen et al., 2006).
2) an increase in problem solving and group skills as well as positive effects on student learning are key advantage associated with students' daily school life within a multi-ethnic classroom (Terenzini et al., 2001).
3) a school's contribution towards ethnic tolerance and more-tolerant viewpoints on illegal aliens benefits the larger society. This is possible when ethnic-majority students are part of classrooms comprising peers from different ethnic-minority groups (Janmaat, 2012).

Key Activities to Implement

The following activities can be easily implemented into the classroom setting. It should be noted that some of the activities require the help and participation of parents and colleagues since they are intended to impact the school positively as a whole. For the activities at the school-wide level, it would be a good idea to involve colleagues from the same and different departments.

Activity One: Potluck. This could be done at the school-wide level. It could be costly for some parents, so they can share the cost of the ingredients needed to prepare traditional dishes. Preparing traditional dishes may be a good opportunity for parents and students of different ethnic backgrounds as well as teachers, administrators, and school staff to come together, eat different typical dishes, and engage in networking. This activity may also create a sense of awareness of and support for the diverse student population at school.

Activity Two: Research-Based Presentations on Ethnicity. I suggest English teachers and teachers of different content-area subjects require their students to investigate multiple ethnic groups in Ecuador. Either using technology-based presentations or chart papers, students can present their "research-based" works to the whole class. This may highlight the beliefs, clothes, traditions, and festivities of different Ecuadorian ethnic groups. For this activity, students can choose to present their own ethnic group, a different ethnic group, or help a peer make his/her presentation about his/her ethnicity. Ideally, this activity should be done in pairs or in small groups of three students, so every students can get the most out of it.

Activity Three: Ethnicity Quilt (this is a variation of the Cultural Quilt strategy). This involves multiple tasks and skills such as drawing, colouring, writing, and sharing. For this activity, students need to draw and/or to find pictures that represent the most important things about their ethnicity, and next to their drawings and/or pictures they can write key words/ phrases that help their classmates better understand their piece of work. I think it will be helpful for teachers to use this activity as a way of learning more from their students' ethnic backgrounds.

Activity Four: The Ethnically Diverse Journal. Students need to keep a journal in which they write down the things that make their ethnic groups unique and special. Each student writes a journal using their own personal experiences based on daily interactions with members of their ethnic group as well as encounters with non-members of their ethnic group. Then students are encouraged to exchange journals with the aim of allowing at least three peers to comment on the writer's experiences, interactions, and encounters. In this task, students may be asked to find similarities, if any, in order to attempt to reach a consensus.

Activity Five: From small groupwork to whole class discussion. This strategy involves several steps. First of all, teachers should provide their students with a controversial issue/issues regarding ethnicity. The students watch a video that provokes in-depth thinking. The teacher could choose a video from an Ecuadorian classroom situation or from a foreign classroom situation. The issues portrayed in the chosen video could be racist, name-calling or social exclusion from play, for instance. After students watch the video, the teacher groups them into threes. Each group needs to come up with suggestions, activities, or ideas aimed at solving the targeted issues. Then each group comes up with a plan of action of how the group will implement their helpful ideas or solution at school. Then each group presents their ideas and plan of action to the class. Each group is supposed to convince their counterparts that their ideas and plans are the best in solving the issue. A good idea may be to give the most convincing group a little award or present (e.g., a traditional piece of fruit or chocolates from Ecuador) at the end of the activity. Finally, the groups' works need to be displayed at the school main bulletin board.

Concluding Remarks

First and foremost, I think that the five different activities can be easily implemented into the Ecuadorian classroom context because they are meaningful and relevant to the reality in which teachers are currently involved in, in terms of ethnically diverse classrooms. I think the suggested activities are good learning opportunities whereby both students and teachers can become aware of the growing presence of ethnic groups at school. By incorporating the activities into their lessons, teachers can also help students develop respectful and tolerant attitudes towards ethnic diversity across the country.

As previously stated, teachers will have to face more challenges regarding an increasing student population from different ethnic backgrounds in Ecuador. Therefore, the information and ideas included in this paper may help teachers encounter these situations with more ease and confidence. It is paramount because teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to value and respect ethnic diversity in their classrooms and promote tolerance and respect in their students towards ethnicity. On a daily basis, this will help students better interact with people of varied ethnic backgrounds, immigrants, and legal aliens, who may all live together within the same community. Teachers and students together will help create a society that celebrates and embraces ethnic diversity in the generations to come all over Ecuador.

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Readers for Young Learners: Considerations for the Language Teacher.

Matt Walpole

The use of graded readers in Young Learner (YL) programmes is a common enough feature of a syllabus in many private language schools. However, during my experience working in teacher management I found that when conducting developmental observations for teachers, use of the reader could be given short shrift: a last gasp lesson component that too often leaves the opportunities for linguistic, cultural, and creative development under explored. What I hope to outline below are a number of brief considerations behind the reasons why, and broad suggestions how readers might be more fully utilised.

Global citizenship

In a global context, wide reading for all children, in any language, can educate the whole child. In an increasingly globalised yet divisive world, Ghosn, writing from Lebanon, highlights the fact that language teachers, who are not always '*bound by fixed content'*, may have a certain amount of freedom in choosing books that '*cultivate the skills and attitudes of global citizenship'*, and which can '*transmit the values of society'* (2003: n.p.). In particular, she highlights the idea that literature can develop empathy and intercultural awareness in our young learners, going as far as to suggest that without stories, the development of empathy may be limited.

Motivation

In addition to wider cultural understanding, the issue of motivating children comes into play. Assuming that young learners studying English are often encouraged (rightly or wrongly) to start at an increasingly younger age, the issue of maintaining motivation in these students over a number of years is instrumental in producing successful language users. Given that children are wonderfully creative and imaginative individuals, use of stories and books rich with language and suspense can be an indispensable tool (Cameron 2001: 159). In the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, classroom readers are defined as intending to '*develop good reading habits, to build up a knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading'* (2010: 193). It is developing this 'liking for reading' that may strike a chord with many teachers. Rather than being only exposed to isolated chunks of language in textbooks, readers provide '*whole instances of language use'* with higher levels of authenticity (Bourke 2006: 282; Cameron 2001: 159).

Book Selection

Book selection is undoubtedly a vital consideration for the teacher, and there is a great deal of literature to support guidance of choice, including considerations related to engaging content, values and attitudes, organisation of discourse, balance of dialogue and narrative, use of language, and new vs recycled language (Cameron 2001: 168-169). Malkina (1995: 38) neatly summarises finding the right story in terms of balancing objective criteria (relating to linguistic features), with that of subjective criteria (relating to the preferences of the children). Of course, just how useful a reader can be culturally or linguistically to the students will depend a great deal on the way in which is taught.

The role of scaffolding and grading

The idea of teacher as mediator has its roots firmly placed in Vygotskian theory whereby with '*the help of adults, children can do and understand much more than they can on their own'* (Cameron 2001: 6). When it comes to readers, Malkina states that in order for comprehension to be facilitated or scaffolded, it may well be necessary to adapt the text (1995: 38). To this end, a number of graded reader series are available to assist learners. Grading can also help to develop automaticity in reading, and a useful analogy of this level of help could be classified as *i minus 1*. This in turn helps to facilitate extensive reading, the goal of which is to '*read relatively quickly and to understand the general ideas rather than to focus on the details'* (Hinkel 2006: 123). The ability to read extensively hinges on the density of unknown words, and so scaffolding of bottom-up processing in terms of word recognition is necessary to support learners (Hinkel 2006: 120).

Students' support needs are also made clear through research conducted in Hong Kong demonstrating that students are often 'textbound' in that overly focusing on English at the sentence level prohibits more macro understanding (Chau, et al 2012: 310). In this sense, it becomes essential to heavily scaffold top-down macro concepts concerning the book to the learners in order to aid understanding, and therefore enjoyment.

With this in mind, and in order to avoid inadequate utilisation of the reader, planned use of pre, while, and post-reading may ensure that primary concerns of cultural setting, main characters and plot summary of the book are catered for, as well as key word recognition.

Pre / While / Post reading framework

Pre and post reading stages can be designed to linguistically and cognitively scaffold both bottom-up / micro (lexical) and top-down / macro (setting, plot) aspects of any book, which should serve to build students' interest and motivation. Cameron states that it is the teacher's job '*to work from the theme or story to make the content accessible to learners and to construct activities that offer language learning opportunities*' (2001: 159). To try and achieve this, visual aids and kinesthetic activities can be created in the form of pictures and games in order to stimulate the students, aid understanding, and compensate for the greater need that children have to be motivated by the teacher (Ur 1996: 289). As Garvie suggests, teachers should '*be prepared to give time, energy and skill to the preparation and collection of teaching* materials', and should these work well in class, they could be kept in '*a fairly permanent kit',* providing easy access and support for other teachers (1991: 57-63).

In terms of pre-reading, focusing on macro concepts to aid overall comprehension is advisable. Cameron argues that children '*need to be able to enter the imaginative world that the story creates'* (2001: 166), which means that they would have a more successful chance of understanding and empathising with the characters, echoing Ghosn's ideas above. Activities concerned with understanding both meaning and form (word recognition) of key lexis are also worthwhile; an obvious benefit of readers is the rich vocabulary they can offer, often in stark contrast to textbooks. Though meaning should be naturally supported by context, Cameron, citing Elley (1989), notes that teacher explanations of new words supported with visuals resulted in dramatic increase in vocabulary gain (2001: 164).

The while-reading stage can naturally provide repeated exposure to the target lexis. Although this stage is flexible in terms of interaction patterns and number of times read, it is important for the teacher to read to the students, and not solely have the students reading. As Hudelson argues, '*second language learners need to be read to, by fluent models of English reading'* (1994: 146). The more exposure the students have to the written forms of the lexis is crucial in terms of their automatisation. Recognition of key lexis also frees up cognitive space for processing of deeper comprehension. For this reason, review activities (including spot the error; gap fills) can also be included in the post-reading stages. For students who are fast-finishers, some minor vocabulary substitution / extension activities are optional in the post-reading stage to allow some flexibility and maintain motivation (Lindstromberg 2004: 2).

Use of readers in the classroom can offer our young learners chances to open their imaginations and go beyond the linguistic and cultural confines of the classroom. It is hoped that the above considerations can serve as a reminder to teachers and managers alike of some wider considerations behind the use of the reader, and by taking the time to encourage fuller exploration of stories in the way they deserve, perhaps reading in English can become a lifelong joy for our students.

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Continuing Professional Development as a tool for developing Growth Mindset.

Kate Gregson

Mindset, a term that has entered our everyday speak in recent years, was coined by Dweck within the field of education to mean 'the assumptions, expectations, and beliefs that guide our behaviour and our interactions with others' (in Sousa and Tomlinson, 2011:18). On the premise that mindset can positively or negatively influence learning and development, in this article I aim to explore and encourage reflection on the development and influences of teacher mindset.

Mindset begins to form in early childhood, and is moulded by experience and interaction with others, becoming engrained in our person, influencing our educational success all the way into adulthood. At two ends of a continuum, on which people tend to lean one way or the other, lie *fixed* - 'your qualities are carved in stone' (Dweck, 2006:6) - and *growth* - 'your basic qualities are something you can cultivate through your efforts' (Dweck, 2006:7) - mindsets. *Fixed mindset* (FM) has been related to the notion of *Fixed Intelligence*, or *Entity Learning*, the all-or-nothing view: 'you either get it, or you don't'. (Perkins, 2009:69). Here, people tend to focus on their talents and showing them off, and tend to lack *resilience*, the positive response to challenge (Yeager and Dweck, 2012), resulting in unachieved potential.

Meanwhile, people with a more *growth mindset* (GM) welcome effort as a way to build knowledge. This *incremental* view allows learning to be taken on in manageable units for construction of understanding within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Learners are *resilient* and more likely to achieve their highest potential.

Teacher mindset: Teaching and learning

Teachers are likely to hold deep-seated beliefs about learning, development and intelligence, which are influenced by their own learning experiences and culture at the family, school and society levels (Sousa and Tomlinson, 2011). Teachers with a more FM orientation (FMOT) might believe that some of their learners are not very intelligent or are not naturally 'good at languages' and others who just get it, without even trying. Teachers with a more GM orientation (GMOT), however, may feel that most learners can learn most things if they make an effort; their role is to inspire and support that effort. Its societal roots suggest that teacher mindset varies across and between cultures, perhaps with more FMOTs in contexts where a traditional, transmission style of education occurs, or where a focus is on exam success and more GMOTs in cultures valuing more progressive education. Teacher mindset directly influences practice - teaching style, classroom management, teacher-learner interactions, formative assessment practices and so on – and has a knock-on influence on learners' own mindset, in particular with children.

The value and insights from experience may also be seen differently. GMOTs may actively seek out new experiences, take on different or challenging classes or levels, or work on different teaching projects, because they welcome challenge and value the positive influence on their practice of broad experience. Meanwhile, FMOTs may prefer teaching repeat classes, which are safe and likely not to require effort or threat. As such, they could tread water professionally, potentially becoming de-skilled over time and even more fixed in their mindset. GMOTs, meanwhile, continue to grow professionally and to expand their horizons through diverse experiences with different learners in different contexts (Gregson, 2016).

By raising teachers' awareness of their own mindset, perhaps looking to encourage GM orientation, the learning of both the learners and the teachers themselves could be increased. GMOTs will generally hold a view of life-long learning, where their own professional development is in continual, continued and incremental development. A good start for this awareness-raising would seem to be at the initial training stage, in order to inspire teachers' CPD.

Teacher Mindset: Teacher Education

Beginning at the beginning, with initial pre-service teacher training, we can probably assume that FM and GM trainees would view its purpose differently, the former as a door into the teaching world, to be shut after use, and the latter as just a start to the Teacher Education journey. It seems logical, then, to begin the awareness-raising process at this stage. Indeed, several CPD frameworks support this: Cambridge Assessment English's *English Teaching Framework*; Eaquals' *Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development*.

Different models of training at in-service as well as pre-service stages seem to perpetuate or reinforce these different views. Wallace (1991), for example, introduces the Reflective Model alongside the Craft and Applied Science Models, which both tend towards transmission of skill and knowledge, where the trainee needs to make a less cognitive effort to learn. In the Reflective Model, however, trainees utilise received knowledge in combination with experiential knowledge for guided (or unguided) reflection on practice (their own or observed), which feeds into the 'continuing cycle of practice and reflection which leads to a

dynamic, developmental concept of professional competence' (Wallace, 1991:59) and improved decision-making skills (Yost et al., 2000). Indeed, for experienced and inexperienced teachers alike, effective critical reflection likely requires a GM, as it maintains an incremental view of professional learning over the teaching career (Gregson, 2016).

Valuing and building on individuals' experience in a 'broaden & build' approach allows for deepening of knowledge and skills, allowing for long-term development (Fredrickson, in Galaczi et al., 2017:12), even at pre-service level, hence, supporting an incremental view of Teacher Education (Gregson, 2016). Furthermore, trainers can model good GM practice in the training room and provide specific and meaningful focus on the whys and wherefores of CPD, perhaps with support of the *English Teaching Framework.* which specifies four stages of teacher development in five aspects of knowledge and skill (Galaczi et al., 2017).

As a result, teachers may be more likely to value and follow CPD, for example through journal-keeping, critical reflective practice, classroom investigation or action research (Gregson, 2016). Collaboration with like-minded colleagues in informal or more formal professional groups, such as by establishing a Critical Friends Group, where teacher colleagues come together to support each other in the development of their classroom practice (Vo & Nyuyen, 2010), or being active in online communities and groups. Teachers may value self, peer and mentor/supervisory observation and learner feedback more: where FMOTs might perceive observation as a chore or even a threat, GMOTs welcome constructive feedback as developmental and will gain from observing others.

Conclusion

To sum up, teacher mindset has great influence not only on students' learning and mindset, but also has an impact on a teacher's view of their own professional development and training. If we are able to encourage more of a growth mindset among teachers, then those teachers will in turn likely develop further and gain greater satisfaction from their profession. This implies a positive snowball effect - continual improvement of teaching and learning. Beginning at pre-service level, we can aim to inspire teachers and help them develop more of a growth mindset through relevant and effective CPD.

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Book Review: Language Teaching Competences (Richard Rossner)

Dan Sumner

Rossner's book explores teaching competence frameworks, in particular the European Profiling Grid, and serves as a useful tool for managers, trainers and teachers to encourage reflection and to help guide teachers' professional development.

Published by OUP, *Language Teaching Competences* is the first of a three book series entitled *Language Education Management,* whose stated aim is to serve as a practical guide for managers, trainers and those with managerial responsibilities who are working in the field of language education. The frameworks used in the series are based on Eaquals guidelines and they are designed to offer background information, guidance and opportunities for reflection.

Language Teaching Competences focuses mainly on the European Profiling Grid (EPG) which is a set of criteria developed by Eaquals for managers, trainers and teachers to measure teacher competence within the institutions they work. According to the EPG website, the grid emerged from the criteria used by Eaquals schools around the world for inspections and it focuses on four areas; professional conduct, key teaching competencies, qualifications and experience and language, and culture (http://www.epg-project.eu/grid/).

The book is divided into five sections. The first elucidates the aims as well as providing background information and discussion on key terms used when assessing teacher competences. The next section compares various frameworks used in language education across different contexts, including the British Council CPD framework and the Cambridge English testing Framework, both of which Rossner states were influenced by the EPG. The third section looks in more detail at the descriptors within the four categories of the EPG and then the fourth section offers guidance for teachers and managers on how to use the EPG in practice, including its online version, the e-grid. The final section of the book focuses on the Eaquals Framework for language teacher training and development and offers some final thoughts about competence frameworks in general.

One feature of *Language Teaching Competences* which I particularly liked was the provision, throughout the book, of activities for readers with questions, often relating to the EPG, and also presented are fictitious teacher scenarios which many of the questions centre round. These activities help to illustrate how the EPG should be used in practice and also make the book more interactive and engaging. Other positive features are the layout of the book which I found to be user friendly; it is easy to navigate and to dip into specific sections with a conclusion at the end of each chapter.

In terms of the EPG itself, I believe that using descriptors and common criteria, with a view to more objectively measure 'good teaching', is a positive approach in order to, as Rossner suggests, "reduce the subjectivity and selectiveness" of this process (2017:55). However, some of the competences could arguably be measured more easily than others. For example, areas such as Education and Training are likely to be easier to evidence than Intercultural Competence which would be more subjectively assessed. An example of this is the descriptor which states that to meet 3.1 a teacher would have to show they "can anticipate and manage effectively areas of intercultural sensitivity" (Rossner, 2017:162). This is something which language teachers working in multicultural classrooms would take into account all the time, but it is not necessarily easy to provide solid evidence. Another descriptor in this category requires a teacher to show they "can select materials that are well matched to the cultural horizon of learners" (Rossner, 2017:162). Again, due to the vagueness of this descriptor, it is likely this competence would be difficult to measure and open to wide interpretation.

Nevertheless, these criticisms could perhaps be directed at almost any teacher assessment framework and the descriptors arguably need to be broad, as the EPG is designed to be applicable in multiple contexts. Also, throughout the book Rossner (2017), emphasizes that the EPG should be used primarily as a reflective tool for teachers and as a platform for discussion with managers to inform professional development, rather than to "create obstacles for them (teachers) to overcome" or to provide "solutions to performance management" (2017:154).

Overall, this book provides a useful insight into the development of frameworks for language teacher competence as well as guidance on how to use them effectively. It is particularly useful for managers and trainers, especially for those working in Eaquals accredited and affiliated institutions, encouraging teachers to reflect on their knowledge and competence, thus better informing their professional development.

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Book Review: Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience

Heidy Matute

A wide-range of innovative approaches and strategies have been suggested by well-known experts in ELT to support instructors from different backgrounds. However, few of them seem to take a special interest in developing methodologies to work in teaching environments where difficult circumstances and low-resource classrooms exist; considering factors such as large numbers of students, lack of space, materials, technological devices, learners coming from under-privileged backgrounds and diverse linguistic levels.

Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience seeks to provide useful training material obtained from the reflections of teachers working under those realities. This book emerged from a five-day workshop, directed by Richard Smith and other experts, where positive ideas were taken to remove the teachers' weaknesses and develop their practice, thereby improving their confidence in dealing with challenges. The book promotes cooperation among teachers and provides guidance through a contextualized approach. It consists of two parts with a total of 68 easy-to-follow pages where the participants present their experiences, enquiries and recommendations.

When I read the book, I was especially taken by the teachers' stories of success. These included students who ended up reciting poems, having originally shown little interest in reading, and the teacher who created a school in a garage. This work makes us reflect on our practice, as it's better to focus not just on the limited resources or difficult circumstances that we have, but on creating a positive environment for our students. Additionally, it is of high importance for teachers to share their sense of appreciation for each other's experiences and encourage a culture of sharing. These ideas are greatly appreciated in my context because in Ecuador we do not have spaces like this to learn from other colleagues.

The book continues with seven reports about teachers questioning their own practices. They describe issues related to the use of the students' mother tongue in the classroom, how to increase participation, how to manage multiple classes in one room without partitions, and how to correct written work with a large number of students. As for the latter, Ecuadorian public schools experience something similar where teachers deal with six or seven classes of 40 to 50 students. Each story ends with reflective questions that invite the reader to consider trying the activity in their own practice and develop a deeper understanding.

To sum up, *Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience* is a valuable resource for teachers who work in difficult circumstances and low-resourced classrooms, since it not only gives us useful strategies, but also encourages collaboration. Even if my professional context in Ecuador is probably not as challenging as that of the teachers sharing their creativity and enthusiasm with us, I find I can take away a number of ideas that I can usefully apply in my own setting. Beyond that, the teachers in the workshops that led to the present volume are now my virtual colleagues and will be an inspiration for some time to come.

Reference:

This publication is free to download in pdf format below:

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