

Utilizing Innovative Ways for Pedagogizing EFL Teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to propose a useful concept of functional models for pedagogizing EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. Models here are defined as contentless tasks or assignments that promote situated teacher learning. These models or frames were developed using current understandings of the effective teaching of teachers and advocated for a sociocultural perspective. In practice, EFL teacher trainers can make use of a series of models or frames and reflect on their potential uses together with the particular teaching of teacher concepts that they would like to promote and make use of.

Keywords: Models; Pedagogizing; Teacher Training

I. Background

The significance of learning and teaching materials in EFL and ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts can certainly not be downplayed (Nunan, 2001). For English language teachers, effective and realistic training materials employed are of utmost importance as language teacher roles would far more affect the way they teach and deliver English language classes subsequently in their professional life. It has been found that a lot of activities and tasks in the field of teaching EFL teachers are dependent upon so called ready-made, well-chosen materials that have not changed much since they were published some time ago. In some cases, these materials are quite dated as they were first introduced in the 1990s and the field of teacher training has progressed significantly since then. Moreover, many of the materials for teaching EFL teachers are content-based and their developers or makers often purport that these materials can be used in any training scenario regardless of their particularities or eligibility of the local context. In this

regard, such materials favor a look and study approach to teaching teachers as teachers just have to examine the given text and replicate precisely, hopefully culminating in learning best practices that teacher trainers are expected to know or make use of and reflect on how well the duplication has gone. In contrast, recent literature on training teachers tends to indicate that best practices in the field need to be instilled with more attributes than those afforded by the look and study perspective (Maggioli, 2012). What is needed at present is a new approach of better training teachers to be exposed to practical, grounded and updated materials and activities that could help maximize their learning to become professional language teachers in the future.

II. What to teach EFL teachers at this time

When evaluating training programs, some types of standards have to be set with reference to pertinent concepts or theories (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Advocates of a new way of teaching or coaching EFL teachers focus on four major characteristics that teachers trainers need to take into account when they design their instruction or teaching syllabus. First, experiential basis has to be considered. In order to deal with the negative effects of new teachers' insufficient understandings, teacher training activities should engage teacher trainees in experiencing ways which they are expected to teach students in. The use of an experiential learning cycle, which starts from an experience, reflecting on it, generating principles to planning how to apply this new learning, in fact promotes this type of understanding needed.

Second, reflective learning is a key. One milestone of a sociocultural perspective to teaching EFL teachers is the engagement of the new teacher in reflecting on the impacts of their pedagogy on student learning. The aforementioned models allow ambitious EFL teachers to revisit through analysis and evaluation of their own experiences, and those of their students, while, at the same time, paving the way for creating new insights into teaching and learning.

Third, high order thinking plays an important role in teacher instruction. Since a number of teacher training activities must mainly rely on construction rather than transmission, the said models are developed so that they directly emphasize higher order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation and even creativity. Each of the models presented acts as a problem posing activity, which teacher trainers have to solve and assess in order to take part in their own creation of teaching and learning opportunities.

Last but not least, it concerns community building as well. From a teacher training perspective, teaching or training teachers can be best understood as an effort to build a community. The main task of the training teachers is to utilize professional learning optimally so that novice EFL teachers to the ELT field can function effectively in the language classroom and produce quality teaching resulting in learners' quality learning. In this regard, the proposed models allow eager EFL teachers to construct their own knowledge through collaborative learning opportunities that are appropriate to the context in which they will operate.

III. A Proposed Model

A sample model by and large consists of boxes in the top part of the template to appraise the four main characteristics provided (experiential foundation, reflective learning, higher order thinking, and community building) and their appropriateness to different purposes. Teacher trainers (participants) can also think of variations to the activity and possible topics to be explored further. It is required that prior to the session, a list of prompts requiring participants to use their judgement and their knowledge of the topic to take a position be provided in which case the prompts can be shown on the board or the screen. Then, participants each are given a copy of the template so that can write down their responses. Following this, in pairs, they discuss the prompt and come to an agreement on a common position. Finally, it is debriefing time where the pairs share their common position with the rest of the class and elaborate how they have reached that position. After analyzing a number of models, participants would realize that they get to exemplify all the characteristics presented (See a proposed model in Figure 1.1). The following step is for participants to decide whether the models could be used as motivational openers (O), for processing input (I), for review (R), for assessment for learning (A) or for learning professional lexicon (L). These different purposes help teacher trainers to introduce a wide variety of topics in the syllabus. In particular, they can support motivated teachers to engage in using professional language through professional learning and assimilation. It is in fact the use of technical terms which is one of the criteria that distinguishes professional teachers from non-professional ones.

Discussion template	
Instructions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare a list of prompts that require participants to use their judgement of the topic to take a position before the session. The prompt is then shown clearly. 2. Give each participant a copy of this template so all can write simultaneously. 3. Pair participants to discuss the prompt and come to an agreement. 4. Allow each pair to share with the class and explain their position. 	
<p><i>Apply the following codes:</i></p> <p>Usage:</p> <p>ef = experiential focus</p> <p>h = high-order thinking</p> <p>r = reflective learning</p> <p>c = community building</p>	<p>Characteristics:</p> <p>O = Opener</p> <p>P = Processing</p> <p>R = Review</p> <p>A = Assessment</p> <p>L = Lexicon Learning</p>
Your opinion and rationale	
Your supporting argument(s)	Your opposing argument(s)

Figure 1.1: A proposed model

Due to the nature of the models proposed, which is content free, they become genuine mediational tools or devices that could assist teacher trainers to satisfy a wide variety of training purposes. At the same time, the models can allow inspiring EFL teachers to contextualize their learning to their current teaching situations and contexts. It is therefore reasonable to state that training teachers at present requires actual data from practice. The concept of learning by doing rather making use of or deploying ‘what has been done and commonly held before’ therefore applies well in this case particularly when it comes to looking for qualities that are desirable in framing or pedagogizing English as a foreign language teacher in the present time.

References

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