

The following pages were designed to facilitate a Teacher Training workshop / seminar in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This syllabus was created without definite knowledge of the educational needs of its participants, (i.e. the various levels the instructors taught, the age-group of the students working with each teacher, the socio-economic conditions surrounding their place of employment, etc.) For that reason, the intent of this seminar was not to lay down edicts for teachers to follow, but rather to inspire self-learning through dialogue. The varying experiences of each participant would be crucial to any endeavor such as this, with the facilitator merely acting as a co-participant in a clearing house for concerns, complaints, as well as success stories.

Throughout this text, questions are asked of the teachers in order to spur creative thinking and promote cooperative strategizing. My goal was to leave each teacher with an invigorating set of ponderings, the answers to which can ultimately only be answered through each individual's interest in their own professional, educational pathway. It would be one's hope that material such as this would be applicable to other cultural settings as well.

-J.Anderson

2010

Investigating Reading / Listening Strategies

Our goal(s) are:

To better understand the processes of "receptive skills" and the importance of facilitating students in order to achieve our students' learning goals:

Hypothetical premise:

- a) Reading: Reading is more than merely identifying symbols on a page and reciting them correctly.
- b) Listening: Listening is more than correctly reciting what has been heard.

(Teachers, please write down on paper what you think the goals of listening and reading might be.)

PART ONE

Listening

Key Concept 1:

Auditory Learners: Although some students will have in-born abilities that exceed another student's, the goal of Reading / Listening practice is to develop these skills for all students.

Teachers: Who are the more advanced students in your classroom(s)? What do they have in common?

Learning Through Listening

Key Concept 2:

Auditory Skill-building: “Students learn best through discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.” (based on Gardner’s “Types of Intelligence” and the International Baccalaureate Organization philosophy)

Teachers: Is listening without speaking a satisfactory means of learning? If not, does speaking aloud strengthen learning?” Please write down your thoughts.

(Intra)personal Intelligence

Key Concept 3:

Students gain the “ability to self-reflect and be aware of one's inner state of being. These learners try to understand their inner feelings, dreams, relationships with others, and strengths and weaknesses.” (based on Gardner’s “Types of Intelligence” and the SILC / Al Yamamah University philosophy)

Teachers: Can listening facilitate self-awareness? Can it help the struggling student? How?

Group Activity

“Listening” Brainstorming - What are the biggest problems teachers (and students) face and what solutions have they tried? How/why did these fail/succeed?

Determine and define problem

Identify alternative solutions

Evaluate alternative solutions

Choose best alternative

Implement the decision

Evaluate and control

Key Concept 4:

Students’ skills include: “Recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, reflecting and analyzing themselves, awareness of their inner feelings, desires and dreams, evaluating their thinking patterns, reasoning with themselves, understanding their role in relationship to others”

Teachers: Hypothesis-- Self-discovery is a key to learning. How can classroom activities promote self-awareness?

(Inter)personal Intelligence:

Key Concept 5:

Students strengthen their “ability to relate and understand others.” These learners try to see things from other people's point of view in order to understand how they think and feel. They often have an uncanny ability to sense feelings, intentions and motivations. They are great organizers, although they sometimes resort to manipulation. Generally they try to maintain peace in group settings and encourage co-operation.”

“They use both verbal (e.g. speaking) and non-verbal language (e.g. eye contact, body language) to open communication channels with others.” (based on Gardner’s “Types of Intelligence” and the SILC / Al Yamamah philosophy)

Teachers: Does students’ self-esteem play a part in classroom activities? How can it positively affect learning? What are the problems with low self-esteem in students?

Task:

Brainstorm: What are the biggest problems teachers (and students) face when teaching Reading and Listening and what solutions have they tried. How/why did these fail/succeed?

Determine and define problem
Identify alternative solutions
Evaluate alternative solutions
Choose best alternative
Implement the decision
Evaluate and control

Key Concept 6:

Students’ skills include: “The increased ability to “see things from other perspectives (dual-perspective), listening, using empathy, understanding other people's moods and feelings, counseling, co-operating with groups, noticing people's motivations and intentions, communicating both verbally and non-verbally, building trust, peaceful conflict resolution, establishing positive relations with other people.” (Gardner and Al Yamamah University)

Teachers: Can students listening to other students help promote a sense of unity among the entire classroom? Can increased “unity” help struggling students? How?

Tasks:

1. Have participants break into groups
2. Distribute sample lessons
3. Have each group discuss how their lesson could be taught with the student-centered approach.
4. Have a representative for each group prepared to share the groups' ideas.
5. Open discussion.

Teachers divide the above problems into four groups:

- A. teacher-related
- B. student-related
- C. materials-related
- D. environment-related

Determine and define problem

Identify alternative solutions

Evaluate alternative solutions

Choose best alternative

Implement the decision

Evaluate and control

PART TWO

Reading

Purpose of the Text

Concept 1:

“Widdowson (1983:32) states that "apart from the text having to engage the interest of the reader, the text has to be in some sense consistent with the traditions that the learners are familiar with”.

Teachers: Can students be forced to learn something they have no interest in? If not, how can we engage our students in activities?

Concept 2:

Povey (1979:163) suggests "selecting various texts concerned with the same topic, or basing selection on prose or poetry dealing with similar attitudes, but adds that it is very important to choose texts dealing with subjects which will be of interest to learners from the outset."

Teachers: Do you vary the "style" of the subject matter when students read and listen? Why or why not?
What do you do in your classroom(s) to keep each day fresh?

Concept 3:

There are authors such as Adeyanju (1978:136) who feel that texts need not be "of great aesthetic quality as long as they are genuinely significant culturally."

Teachers: How does one's "culture" play a part in learning? Should subject matter be culturally relevant? Why or why not?

"Cultural Education" Brainstorming:

Tasks:

1. Have participants break into groups
2. Distribute sample lessons
3. Have each group discuss how their lesson could be taught with the student-centered approach.
4. Have a representative for each group share their ideas.
5. Open discussion.

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Reading Tips from Dorit Sasson (www.suite101.com)

- **"zooming in" on the text.** Students go back and reread a sentence or part of a sentence that was confusing. What is a word, a phrase or an entire sentence that caused a breakdown in understanding? Once they have identified the part or parts, they can refer to other sources such as guessing from context or using a dictionary.
- **Jump back and reread.** Encourage the students not to get stuck too long on a confusing part of the text. They can always go back, reread and guess.
- **Try and try again.** If a student cannot understand, s/he should be encouraged to try and try again using all available sources such as guessing using contextual clues such as using the knowledge of parts of speech."

What's the secret to teaching reading strategies?

Dorit Sasson says:

"The key to teaching reading strategies is to teach it without bringing it to the forefront of the lesson. It is recommended to teach the strategies (without naming them) only **after** the students accomplish some task based on the reading strategy."

Teachers: Do you effectively use reading and listening components in a creative, supplemental fashion?

"Students of Junior High school age are still too young to understand and remember the names of the strategies and it is pointless in lecturing and naming reading strategies."

Teachers: Do you feel you are able to "edit out" unnecessary information from your classroom methodology?

"Once they have processed information, the teacher can mention the reading strategy in a by-the-way manner in terms of what they used and how it may help them in the future."

Teachers: Can learning be so entertaining that students hardly realize they are learning?

"If a teacher gets a positive reaction from the students, s/he can use this opportunity and expand on it."

Teachers: Do you literally "take note" of your successful strategies and build upon them?

"Even if the teaching and/or learning experience was not positive, it is a good idea to learn from it and understand what went wrong and what could have motivated them more."

Teachers: Do you use your less-than-successful moments as a chance to develop your own personal professional growth plan?

"The next time, the teacher can remind the students of having used the strategies when they worked on a particular text and how using those strategies helped them understand the text better."

Teachers: Do you build upon your successes by showing students how they made their gains? Is using "follow-up" strategies a good way to "cement" student understanding?

Using the Visual Aid Method to Teach Reading Strategies

Dorit Sasson says:

"A helpful way to teach and reinforce reading strategies is through the use of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers appeal to a variety of multiple intelligences and it is important for students see the connection between the visual element and the reading task."

Teachers: Are the visual arts an effective way of aiding language learner? How?

Final Words

"By finding indirect methods of teaching strategies, a teacher will have "taught" them something and give them the impression of learning."

Teachers: Can learning take place almost without students feeling they have "worked at it"? Is this a good approach?

"Homework on reading strategies should serve as a further reinforcement and should be logically connected and come out naturally from the lesson."

Teachers: Does your outside reading and listening strategy relate directly to your teaching / learning objectives? Do your students read at home?

(The copyright of the article **How to Teach Reading Strategies** in ESL Materials is owned by Dorit Sasson.)

PART THREE

A Few Sample Methodologies

Communicative Language Teaching

Communication-based teaching addresses three issues in developing the communication abilities of students:

A.) Teaching the six primary discourse functions through reading and listening consist of:

Narration: Student share information with other students through their own "lived experiences." By recounting stories and other forms of fact-giving, written and / or oral forms of knowledge are provided in a socially-mediated context. Reading their own written work serves both to empower the narrator and provide inspiration for other students who may share similar experiences.

Explanation: Students serve as co-constructors of a body of knowledge by direct example. In doing so, practical information is disseminated and reinforced by the reader either orally or in written form.

Contrast / Comparison: Students learn to analyze content for similarities or differences through their own perceptual understandings. Critical thinking skills are advanced through inductive and deductive reasoning.

Instruction-giving: Students may assist each other in a student-centered tutorial. This helps to remove the teacher as key figure in the educational process, and allow the zone of proximal development to expand (Vygotsky, 1962.)

Persuasion: Students learn the valuable skill of using various forms of logic to promote their budding individuality. Organizational skills and deductive reasoning are strengthened through the art of forming sequential reasoning.

Negotiation: Students learn to strike a balance between persistence and acquiescence by testing their hypothetical understandings with those of their peers. Cooperative skills and compassion are often the result of learning in a socially mediated environment.

B.) Tensions between time needed for language learning and covering curriculum content is always a challenge.

Teachers: Is their "separation" between what you feel you should be teaching and what your school site's curricula calls for? How do you reconcile those differences?

C.) Awareness of how teacher attitudes and behaviors can promote or stifle classroom communication.

Teachers: Do you remain sensitive to each of your students' personal growth in language acquisition? Why or why not?

Grammar Translation Method

The History Behind This Method

"(Traditionally,) classes were conducted in the native language. A chapter in a distinctive textbook of this method would begin with a massive bilingual vocabulary list. Grammar points would come directly from the texts and be presented contextually in the textbook, to be explained elaborately by the instructor. Grammar thus provided the rules for assembling words into sentences."

Teachers: Do you teach in this traditional manner? Is it a requirement of your school site-based agenda?

"...Translation and grammar drills would be used to exercise and strengthen the knowledge without much attention to content. Sentences would be deconstructed and translated. Eventually, entire texts would be translated from the target language into the native language and tests would often ask students to replicate classical texts in the target language."

Teachers: Do you ask your student to depend on rote memorization? Why or why not?

"Very little attention was placed on pronunciation or any communicative aspects of the language. The skill exercised was reading, and then only in the context of translation."

Teachers: Do you let communication play an important role in your students' language development?

A Criticism of This Method

"The method by definition has a very limited scope of objectives."

Teachers: Does your teaching style result in an itemized or in a more wholistic classroom system of delivery? Is it "limited" or more "expansive" as a language learning opportunity?

"Because speaking or any kind of spontaneous creative output was missing from the curriculum, students would often fail at speaking or even letter writing in the target language."

Teachers: Is your teaching style inclusive or exclusive? Are students using their own, "immediate" understandings to progress in their targeted language?

"In commenting about writing letters or speaking, Bahlsen said he would be overcome with "a veritable forest of paragraphs, and an impenetrable thicket of grammatical rules."

Teachers: How did you learn your native language? Was it through trial and error as a child, or was it through formal, atomistic bytes? Can second language learning be directly compared with learning one's first language? Did you learn by listening to others speak your language?

"Theorists such as Vietor, Passy, Berlitz, and Jespersen supported teaching the language, not about the language, and teaching in the target language, emphasizing speech as well as text."

Teachers: Is language best acquired through first-hand reception, or is it learned by rote memorization?

"Through grammar translation, students lacked an active role in the classroom, often correcting their own work and strictly following the textbook."

Teachers: Is your classroom a place where learning takes place in a silent void, or do students seemed engaged in the process through the communicative process?

References

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Content –based Reading and Listening Strategies

What is Content-based Learning?

"Content Based Learning is a study of both language acquisition and subject matter. Instead of teaching language in isolation, the target language becomes the medium in which important information can be learned. When the students are studying a content area of interest

(i.e. snakes, geography, immigration, etc), they are more intrinsically motivated to learn both the content and the language simultaneously. The students are actually able to use their new language." It should be noted that Content Based Learning is most appropriate at intermediate and advanced proficiency levels.

How Can Content-based Learning Be Applied To Our Reading / Listening Needs?

Many models for Content Based Learning exist. In some schools, two teachers might team-teach the content and language. In other schools, the content teacher and the language teacher find ways to tie together their classes and curriculum in order to compliment each other's thematic approach to the curricula. The most challenging situation is where one teacher is responsible for both content and language, i.e. a Biology teacher whose class contains all ESOL students. The teacher must be an expert in both fields, which is often not the case.

Some examples of content based curricula:

- Immersion program (a situation which asks that the student not rely on his / her second language during classroom sessions.)
- Sheltered English programs (a situation where use of both L1 and L2 is acceptable in a classroom setting.)
- Reading across the curriculum (where targeted aspects of linguistic skill-building in secondary schools and universities are extended throughout subject-matter areas like biology, history, art, etc.)

Source: Brown, Douglas. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy

Task-based Reading and Listening Strategies

The Current Situation

Dave Willis: There is currently enormous interest in task-based teaching and learning. But some teachers are still unsure of how to put it into practice. The teacher / students organize of a range of task sequences suitable for all levels of learners, using both written and spoken English. It takes account of research into language learning, and is ideal for both teachers and those on TEFL/TESOL courses."

Example:

David Nunan says:

Teachers: Think of a group of learners with a specific purpose for learning English (for

example, to study in an English-speaking country, to visit Canada as a tourist, etc.). Using the chart below, make a list of the real-world or target tasks that they might need to be able to carry out.

Now make a list of the real-world or target tasks that your learners might need to carry out for their purpose of learning English. Use the chart below.

Real-world/target tasks of learners with a specific purpose for learning English Their purpose for learning English is:	Real-world/target tasks of your learners Their purpose for learning English is:

Nunan asks the students to consider: "How are the lists similar or different? Visit the discussion area to share your ideas with your colleagues."

Nunan's approach, while not directly involving Reading and Listening strategies, can still be used as a means of preparing students for investigative reading, developing "classroom community" based constructivist approaches, and offers ample opportunity for listening practice. At the higher levels of proficiency a certain amount of reading is required of the students to research the task at hand.

Participatory Approach

"The Participatory Learning Environment can refer to any sort of environment where users can co-construct or at least communicate through some form of computer-mediated communication. This definition includes most modern educational technologies" (Barab, 2001)." "P.L.E." is certainly not limited only to computer usage, for computer use is but one tool from which to employ successful teaching strategies.

"The Participatory Learning Environment can also refer to specific forms of advanced learning environments that are based on both situated and constructionist principles. *Networked and situated* micro-worlds might be an appropriate description for these" (Barab, 2001.)

(See also Personal Learning Environment, another use of the **PLE** acronym.)

Barab et al.'s definition: Barab et al. (2001) define a kind of networked and situated micro-world that implements situated learning principles.

The "Constructionist Connection"

(Author's note: This term may not necessarily be interchangeable with "Constructivist" techniques as indicated in my other writings.)

Barab et al. (2001) define participatory learning environments (PLEs) as systems that “engage students in the construction of products requiring practices that embody complex concepts, necessitate collaboration, and contextualize learning within contexts in which problem solving and inquiry are fundamental aspects of the learning process” (Barab, Hay, Barnett, & Keating, 2000; Barab, Hay, Squire, et al., 2000).” (Barab et al. 2001:48)

Teachers: How might this theory translate into your Reading / Listening strategies?

“Consistent with Papert's (1991) constructionist pedagogical framework, PLEs frequently involve learners building understanding through the collaborative construction of an artifact or shareable product.

Rather than presenting instructional treatments, the goal from this perspective is to establish rich environments that encourage explanation and discovery, nurture reflection, and support students in the carrying out of practices that embody personally meaningful and practically functional representations.” (Barab et al. 2001:48)

Teachers: Does collaborative projects among your students produce positive results? Can you give instances in your classroom where you and your students found high levels of success?

The Situated Learning Connection

“The focal point of PLEs is the learners' emergent practices in relation to the need at hand; it is a move from a 'teacher curriculum' to a 'learner curriculum' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or from an acquisition metaphor to a participatory metaphor (Sfard, 1998).

Such an emphasis shifts the focus from the individual as a 'person to be changed' to how to facilitate the emergent practices of learners working collaboratively, with particular emphasis on the learners' reasons for carrying out the activities and the context in which they are nested (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Roth, 1996, 1998).

Teachers: Are you the "driving force" behind each lesson? Are you willing to allow students to play a participatory role? Why or why not?

Learning is conceived of as a 'social process in which meaning is negotiated, goals emerge from social processes, and success is taken within context' (Young, Barab, & Garrett, 2000, p. 160). Learning, from this perspective, is not the acquisition of facts and skills, but an activity involving the appropriation and construction of socially negotiated practices, understanding, and meanings through participation in a trajectory of experience."(Barab et al. 2001:48)

Teachers: Does the cultural aspect of your student population shape the way you teach? Why or why not?

Activity groups

"In the design described in Barab et al. (2001), learners work in *activity groups*, a temporary coming together of people around a particular task (Barab & Duffy, 2000). When working as part of activity groups, learners are frequently given a general description of a task (e.g., construct a virtual reality [VR] play or solar system) and expected to work collaboratively in determining how to best complete the shared task."

Teachers: Do you prefer your students to work individually or do you encourage group work? What are the advantages and disadvantages of your classroom management style?

"From a class perspective, this setup can be described as "collective learning." "Various activity groups might share a common goal and even participate under a common pedagogical framework but construct different final products, as well as procedures for getting there, and, reciprocally, have different group dynamics." (Barab et al. 2001:49)

Teachers: Do your students express their commonalities and differences? Is it a necessary part of their learning environment?

Learning Environments

According to (Barab et al. 2001:50), PLE environments are:

"Technology-rich, integrating technology as a tool for facilitating inquiry, other forms of authentic practice, or both."

"Provide opportunities for students to inquire into the phenomena they are learning and not simply receive information about the phenomena."

"Support students in participating in, not didactically hearing about, domain-related practices."

"Are designed to support the process of learning."

"Establish rich environments (studios, workshops, and construction spaces) where students work collaboratively."

"Immerse students in a context that grounds their understanding to local environmental particulars."

The authors also provide a description that typically could be found in the micro-world literature. PLEs are "emerging technologies that function less like books, films, journals, and broadcasts and more like laboratories, workshops, offices, and studios in which students immerse themselves within contexts that challenge and extend their understanding"

Tasks:

1. Have participants break into groups
2. Distribute sample lessons
3. Have each group discuss how their lesson could be taught with the student-centered approach.
4. Have a representative for each group share their ideas.
5. Open discussion.

(Author / Editor's note: Every effort has been taken to faithfully give credit to all contributors to this seminar material. In certain instances, information has been paraphrased or otherwise altered slightly to lend continuity to our overall learning objectives.)