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Teaching**English**

Developing expertise through experience:
Ideas for continuing professional development

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Introduction to the e-file

This e-file is an online resource which further explores the ideas discussed in *Developing expertise through experience* by Alan Maley (2019).

There are two main sections in this e-file.

The first is about the background to the book, including an article by Alan Maley which traces the origins of the idea for the book.

The second is a set of CPD (continuing professional development) activities suggested by the contributors to the book.

Contents

Part 1:
Background to the book

The article below is a slightly adapted version of an earlier article that appeared under the title 'The teacher's sense of plausibility re-visited', published by *The Indonesian Journal of ELT* in May 2016. I am grateful, in retrospect, to my former MA student, Christine Manara. It was she in her role as editor of the journal who requested an article from me. Without this initiative, it is unlikely I would have written up my own version of my evolving sense of plausibility.

It was this experience of reflecting on my own experiential development which then prompted me to ask 20 experienced professionals to do likewise. The result is the book *Developing expertise through experience* (2019), which is freely available as a download from the British Council's TeachingEnglish website.

A slightly different version of the article also appeared in the magazine *HLT*, Year 21, Issue 3, under the title 'The Power of Personal Experience'.

The teacher's sense of plausibility re-visited by Alan Maley

Abstract

My aim is to give substance to Prabhu's (1987) concept of the 'teacher's sense of plausibility'. That is to say, explore the way teachers develop professionally and personally by building a personal theory of teaching action based upon their own accumulated experiences – and reflection on them.

Objective history is useful but perhaps more interesting are our personal histories. In this paper I shall attempt to link my own personal history in English language teaching (ELT) to the places I have worked in, to the personalities I have encountered, to the evolving currents of ideas and publications, and to key critical moments in my own development.

I shall weave together the five strands of places, personalities, ideas, publications and critical moments to demonstrate how they have influenced the direction of my own continuing development of a personal 'theory' of teaching. I shall suggest that this kind of reflective process can be a valuable element within the framework of teacher development as a whole.

Introduction

This article will be an attempt to put flesh on the framework of Prabhu's concept of the 'teacher's sense of plausibility' (1987) by referring it to my own experience. My understanding of Prabhu's concept is that teachers build their personal theories of teaching and learning through a continuing process of reflection on their lived experiences. It is this process which fuels their personal and professional growth. This conceptualisation of teacher development is significantly different from the 'training' paradigm that currently enjoys popular assent. The training paradigm is broadly algorithmic in nature: 'If we give teachers X forms of training, they will emerge with Y competences.' The 'plausibility' paradigm, by contrast, is broadly heuristic: 'Whatever training we give them, teachers will adapt and transform it according to what works for them and to the belief system they have evolved, and this is forged through the experiences they undergo.'

I shall pursue Prabhu's idea with reference to my own personal experience in relation to the places I have worked in, to the personalities who have been influential, to the ideas and publications in fashion at different stages and to critical moments in my life path. Though I shall separate these for the sake of convenience, they are intricately connected in a cohesive, though not always coherent, network that forms part of who I am.

Critics may argue that this approach is unduly personal and anecdotal and lacks scientific rigour. I would respond by insisting that the act of teaching and learning is not scientific anyway but highly individual and personal to both learners and teachers. While my own sense of plausibility will be different from that of other teachers, my expectation is that some valuable truths may emerge from it which are shared across the profession – and that we might do well to attend to them at least as much as we do to the more algorithmic systems of teacher education.

Early influences

Many of our deeply held beliefs about language and education are formed well before we begin training as teachers of language. Long before I embarked on ELT training, I had had a number of highly formative experiences which still colour my thinking. Here I will cite just four of them.

1. I went to a small country primary school in the UK. At that time, there was a standardised test of intelligence, taken at age 11, which determined whether a child was selected to go to a grammar school – and from there to higher education and a well-paid career – or relegated to the rubbish dump of secondary modern schools, with poor job prospects at best. The test was called the '11+'. I had no understanding of the importance of this test, and neither did my parents, who were themselves educational rejects. Along with my classmates, I took the test … and failed it. In other words, the test judged me to be dumb. I was assigned to a secondary modern school.

   However, fate offered me a helping hand. An experimental class had been set up to prepare some of us to take the same state exams as those taken by grammar school kids. Our teachers were genuinely supportive and I passed my General Certificate of Education five years later in seven subjects. Thanks to the intervention of my kindly headmaster, I transferred to the sixth form of a grammar school and, from there, thanks to the support of another headmaster, was offered scholarships to both Oxford and Cambridge universities.

   What were the enduring beliefs I formed on the basis of these experiences?
   a. *A profound distrust of and disrespect for standardised testing.*
   b. *A belief that teachers can be agents of transformation.*
   c. *A belief that, if you are reasonably intelligent, hard work will get you a long way.*
   b. *Without some luck, it is difficult to succeed.*

2. Aged 12, my French teacher, who in retrospect I realise was a genius, both as a linguist and as a pedagogue, arranged an exchange with a French boy my age. He spent a month with us in England, I then spent a month with his family in the Savoie in France. Dear Emile refused to utter a word of English while with us, and in France, no one spoke a word anyway. So I got two months of total immersion and emerged with passable oral French, an enormous boost to my self-esteem and some understanding of the way people in other countries manage their lives.

What were the enduring beliefs I formed on the basis of these experiences?

a. *That being able to speak a foreign language was a major advantage.*

b. *That teachers can change their students' lives for the better. This had been a truly transformative experience for me; it literally changed my life forever.*

c. *That I could learn a lot on my own, without a teacher.*

d. *That learning languages was a lot of fun.*

e. *A growing suspicion that I might be good at something after all.*

3. Aged 18, I was conscripted into the Royal Air Force, to do two years of national service. After initial training, I was provisionally selected to have specialist training in Chinese. We were all subjected to a standardised aural test of spoken Chinese tones. I failed the test and was declared tone-deaf and therefore unfit to learn Chinese. I was sent to Germany to operate a radar instead. (And there, I learned German by myself without much help from the Royal Air Force. I also taught myself to read Middle English so that I could read Chaucer in the original.)

What were the enduring beliefs I formed on the basis of these experiences?

a. *That tests had once more been shown to be flawed and unfit for purpose.*

b. *That failure was a very negative thing which affected my self-image deeply.*

c. *That institutional education can be acutely unfair. I was convinced that I had a good ear for languages yet I had been excluded by another standardised test. (My belief was vindicated when I subsequently learned Mandarin Chinese while working in Beijing from 1980 to 1984.)*

4. Following this negative experience, I spent 18 months as a radar operator in Schleswig-Holstein, North Germany. I decided I would learn German, partly as a salve to heal the bruises inflicted by the Chinese test. I had a few classes with a young officer on the base, but he was a grammar-translation man with a very literary bent, so I soon gave him up. Instead I taught myself to read German and developed spoken German with the aid of a charming young lady. This was highly motivating and I made rapid progress.

What were the enduring beliefs I formed on the basis of these experiences?

a. *That teachers were only of limited use.*

b. *That affect was of great importance in acquiring a language – and in developing a liking for a language.*

c. *That reading was a very powerful technique for learning a language.*

d. *That language learning is a highly emotional, deeply personal experience, not just a rational one.*

e. *That I was beginning to get the hang of learning languages, and was not afraid of trying more of them.*

So, even before I started my induction into the ELT/applied linguistics tribe, I already had some strongly held views about both education and language.

Training, University of Leeds (1961–62)

After joining the British Council, I was sent to join the first batch of students to undergo a one-year, postgraduate training course at Leeds. Applied linguistics was the brave new world at the time and Leeds had followed Edinburgh and London in setting up this new course under Professors Peter Strevens and Pit Corder. I had absolutely no idea what it was all about when I started and precious little more at the end. I remember the course as a patchwork of largely unrelated topics – phonetics, Hallidayan grammar (all the rage at the time), general topics in applied linguistics and so on.

The ruling paradigm, insofar as there was one, was the structural/situational approach with a dash of direct method, with its theoretical basis in Firth, early practical applications from Palmer, Hornby and West, and more recent contributions from Billows, Strevens and others.

There was an acute paucity of publications. Apart from the practical contributions of Palmer, Hornby and West, virtually the only useful books were Michael West's *The Teaching of English in Difficult Circumstances* (1960) and Lionel Billows' *The Techniques of Language Teaching*, hot off the press in 1961. Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens' *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* did not come out until 1964, though we were given cyclostyled copies of parts of it.

There was virtually no emphasis on practical classroom teaching – this was to be taken care of by our practicum, which took place in Madrid under the watchful but easily distracted eye of the British Council. I was assigned to teach classes in two institutions.

One was the convent school of Santa Isabel for adolescent, upper-class girls. I have only vague memories of what I taught but we had a lot of fun, and would have had more had it not been for the austere presence of a nun sitting at the back of the class!

The other was the university Instituto Superior de Aeronauticos, teaching young men. Here I encountered discipline and motivation problems that still haunt my dreams. English was a required subject, but few if any of the students had any interest in it; they resented having to study it and regarded the classes as an opportunity to create mayhem. Their regular teacher, a middle-aged Englishman with no teaching qualifications whatsoever, advised me to do lots of dictations and reading aloud round the class as a way of keeping minimal control. I ignored his advice, tried to make my classes interesting and was duly crucified. It was like spitting into the wind.

At the British Council, Jack Bruton was developing a structural description of English independently of British academic institutions. The aim was to use this as a practical guide for developing teaching materials. This was an early example of action outside the controlling box of academia.

Back in Leeds, I had my first experience of academic writing – a dissertation on Fanakalo, the lingua franca I had learned while working in the South African gold mines. It was not much use for teaching English but a dissertation was required. And it gave me some more insights into how languages, especially Bantu languages, function – Fanakalo is a blend of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa.

Finally, through a small seminar group run by Professor Derry Jeffares, and amply fuelled by sherry, I was introduced to contemporary English literature and what was at the time called Commonwealth literature – literature in English originating in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Singapore/Malaysia, the Caribbean, etc.

What influence did these experiences have on me?

a. *I became sharply aware of the divide between academic theorising and classroom reality.*

b. *I realised that my future did not lie in academic research but rather in exploring practical materials and methods.*

c. *I realised that the sociopolitical context strongly influences language teaching. (The Franco regime in Spain was lukewarm toward anything foreign.)*

d. *Motivation is key to learning. Unmotivated students do not learn much.*

e. *Colleagues can often be more helpful than lecturers. (Luckily my classmates included many with extensive overseas teaching experience which they shared with the novices like me.)*

f. *I developed what was to be a lifelong interest in literature in English written by non-native speakers of the language and in the many evolving varieties of English worldwide.*

Yugoslavia (1962–66)

The British Council posted me to Beograd in the then Yugoslavia. My duties were vague, so I became a sort of odd-job man. I organised talks on language and teaching – subjects I was precariously ignorant of. I administered a scholarship programme to send key, up-and-coming Yugoslav university staff to the UK for MA and PhD work. I participated in federal summer schools attended by teachers of French, German, Russian and English. I helped out with checking and recording teaching materials for publication. I administered and expanded a programme for supplying British lectors to Yugoslav universities. I arranged visits from senior British ELT personalities, such as the dour Angus McIntosh and the delightful AS Hornby. I even conducted informal conversations with a group of dissident philosophers (the Praxis group) and held regular play-readings for teachers in my flat. And I toured the country far and wide, building contacts mainly with universities. It was a ragbag of activities.

However, I did work with Professor Rudi Filipovic on the federal summer schools and learned something about the work on audiovisual methods then being pioneered in Zagreb under Professor Guberina (Filipovic and Webster, 1962). It was also instructive to work with trainers of Russian, German and French to see how they did things. I worked alongside language specialists from the United States Information Service too, and learned something about the audio-lingual approach then popular in the USA.

The political climate was not especially favourable for the promotion of English. Tito was at the height of his power, the Communist Party controlled many aspects of everyday life and the government worked hard to avoid any suspicion of favouring one language over another. This was to avert conflict with Russia, with whom Yugoslavia had a delicate and ambivalent relationship. So much of my time was taken up in getting round bureaucratic rules and regulations. This was good training for some of my subsequent jobs.

On the personal front, I learned Serbo-Croat and did a lot of socialising. For a few months I had one-to-one lessons, once a week, with a senior teacher at the Institute of Foreign Languages. She was a gentle and sensitive teacher who overcame the ghastly coursebook she was obliged to use. Once I felt I'd begun to function in Serbo-Croat, I stopped taking lessons and concentrated on reading as much as possible and on using the language in my work and with friends. It was only two years later, when I was preparing to take the Foreign Office proficiency exam, that I sought the help of a friend who taught English at the University of Beograd. He skilfully pointed me in the direction of reading materials and 'scaffolded' my imperfect use of grammar and lexis. This minimalist approach suited me well.

I had also learned a lot about socio-linguistics and language policy (though I would not have used these terms at the time). Yugoslavia was a federal republic composed of six republics – Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia – and two 'autonomous regions' – Kosovo-Metohija and Vojvodina. This patchwork of peoples used at least eight languages between them: Serbo-Croat, Slovene, Macedonian, Hungarian, Albanian, Vlach (Romanian), Slovak and Italian. It was a masterclass for me in the delicate balance which plurilingual societies need to function.

What did I take away from the Yugoslav experiences?

a. *I learned more about how to learn a language – in this case a Slavonic language with a different script.*

b. *My teachers taught me the value of timely intervention to help me at key moments chosen by me rather than through routine drudgery.*

c. *The value of reading and social interaction was reinforced.*

d. *I began to understand the complexity of plurilingual societies.*

e. *I began to have my first intimations of the importance of 'method'.*

f. *Also, I experienced the first stirrings of an interest in materials development, though I had not published anything at the time.*

To summarise where I was in my own development, I still had only the vaguest notion that I was part of an evolving profession. ELT (now *ELTJ – English Language Teaching Journal*) had only been founded in 1946 and was a very modest publication, barely thick enough to prop up the leg of an uneven table. The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) had yet to be founded in 1967. So ELT as a profession was in its infancy and I was similarly at the beginning of my proto-professional period.

Ghana (1966–70)

I was next posted to Accra, Ghana, as English Language Officer for the British Council.

Ghana, on the west coast of Africa, was an ex-British colony. English was the official language but there were nine officially recognised languages, including Ewe, Ga, the Akan group, Nzema, Waale and Dangbe. West African pidgin was also in wide use as a lingua franca, as was Hausa in the north. So this was another complex linguistic situation, where English was a second language for official purposes, and where most people routinely spoke at least three African languages.

My job was again quite vaguely defined, but it quickly became clear that the sector in most need of development was primary education. I knew nothing about teaching primary school children and nothing in my so-called 'training' or previous experience had prepared me for this. But very soon, I found myself with a colleague running one-month retraining courses for primary teachers in remote areas of the country. A major part of the content of these courses involved teaching maths and science through the medium of English – a forerunner of content and language integrated learning perhaps? This was the time when the 'new maths' and the 'new science'] were at their peak in schools in UK, and it was from them that we took our ideas. The courses were entirely practical, working with low resources, where the participants were themselves economically deprived. I learned a great deal from trial and error and from the participants and the children, too.

One rapid discovery was the necessity for improvisation. We involved teachers in making puppets from old newspapers then improvising plays and puppet theatres, creating art work from items of rubbish, making colours from natural materials, creating songs and chants and stories drawing on the rich local folk traditions, making telephones from string and plastic cups, etc. Resource-poor led to resource-*ful*ness.

I had my first, ambivalent experiences of educational technology – the clumsy Banda spirit duplicators we took on tour with us, cyclostyle machines with their wrinkled, waxed-paper master sheets (photocopiers were still in the future), old film projectors running off improvised batteries to project films outdoors onto bedsheets hung between trees, massive Grundig tape recorders that needed two people to lift them and even record players with old 78 discs of teaching materials ... I also inherited a small language laboratory, supposedly the solution to all our teaching problems. It was ill-suited to the tropics and soon broke down. I sold it to a Lebanese trader who broke it up and sold the spare parts ...

But Ghana Radio did a good job of broadcasting learning materials, and I became involved in writing a series of programmes using songs and rhymes for primary schools.

Ghana also provided me with my first publishing opportunities. A colleague and I were approached by Thomas Nelson publishers to produce a book of guided conversational dialogues rooted in the West African context. I went on to publish a book of playlets based on the Ananse folk stories. I also contributed material to a major course for West Africa and published two sets of material for Radio Ghana. This was a useful apprenticeship.

I also discovered the tendency of institutions like ministries of education to launch grand schemes without regard to local realities. It had been decided that all children should attend primary school from Class P1. But there were often no schools nor teachers. The solution was to found a large number of teacher training colleges. But again, there were often no buildings and no staff competent to teach in them. The solution was to found one advanced training college, which would train the trainers, who would then train the teachers, who would then staff the schools and teach the children. This kind of back-to-front planning led to many shortcomings in the schools. Perhaps the most glaring example of a mindless project was the provision of television sets for community centres across the country, funded by aid money. Only after the sets had been installed was it discovered that many places did not have electricity!

What were the enduring influences from my Ghanaian experiences?
a. The und*erstanding that teaching English as a subject was less important than education in other subjects through English.*
b. *The importance of drawing on feeder fields – in this case primary maths, science and 'oracy' (MacLure et al., 1988).*
c. *That low material resource situations could be offset by improvisation and exploiting the richness of human resources.*
d. *A belief in the importance of creative activities in language education: drama, music, stories and artwork in particular.*
e. *A degree of scepticism about the uncritical adoption of technology.*
f. *A renewed interest in West African writing in English. This was a golden age, particularly in Nigeria.*
g. *The realisation that there were some fundamental differences between teaching English as a second language and as a foreign language.*
h. *An initiation into the world of publishing and materials development, then in its infancy.*

Italy (1970–74)

I was next posted to Milan as English Language Officer, North Italy. The contrast with Ghana could hardly have been greater. Italy was, and still is, a country with a long cultural history. In many ways it was a highly traditional and conservative society, in education as in other ways. Yet I arrived in the middle of a period of turbulent contestation, with universities and some schools paralysed by strikes and sit-ins. Extreme right- and left-wing groups committed many acts of violence during the period.

On the language teaching front there was also a great stirring, which I had been largely insulated from during my five years in Africa. The work of Wilkins (1976) and others had challenged the reigning paradigm. The communicative approach, with its focus on meaning-focused rather than form-focused teaching, had led to a plethora of articles, books (Widdowson, 1978) and new course materials (O'Neill, 1971; Abbs and Freebairn, 1977; Alexander, 1967). And the Council of Europe's Threshold Level (van Ek et al., 1975) was bringing about a fresh approach to curriculum design. A stimulating breeze was blowing through the whole of ELT.

Italy was not exempt from these currents of change. The teaching of English, especially at secondary level, was highly traditional. I was fortunate to have as my colleague in Rome Donn Byrne, a leading ELT practitioner and author with years of experience. In co-operation with a group of forward-thinking university and secondary teachers, including Sirio di Giuliomaria and Wanda D'Addio, and with the patronage of the well-known Professor Renzo Titone, he helped bring into existence a group called *Lingua e Nuova Didattica* (LEND). Their aim was to transform the teaching of English, especially at secondary level, and to bring it into line with the new insights of the communicative movement. I became involved in a succession of conferences and workshops promoting these ideas. And, in my own area, I began to form teachers' groups in a number of cities across the North. Eventually all this led to the setting up of a government-sponsored retraining scheme for teachers (*Il progetto speciale*).

At a more mundane level, I was responsible for the administration of the Cambridge First Certificate and Proficiency exams in northern cities. It has to be said that the Cambridge exams were very small beer at that time compared with what they subsequently became.

This frenzy of activity left little time for writing for publication, though I did publish two collections of exercises for Longman/British Council, meant to be used in language labs. By the time they were published, they were already obsolete – part of the structural/situational past. I also embarked on a coursebook series for Nelson, which petered out and was never completed. In retrospect, I had over-estimated my own ability and should have built a team to write something so ambitious.

I was also participating in the development of the ELT profession, though I was only dimly aware of it. In 1970, I joined IATEFL and took part in its annual conferences. I began to read more professional literature as the ELT/applied linguistics community started to publish more.

I took full advantage of living in Italy to learn Italian. To begin with, I had a one-to-one teacher. She was a disaster – dogmatic, devoted to grammar and inflexible. I sent her away after just two lessons. I learned through reading fiction, which opened up to me the richness of contemporary Italian literature – undeservedly neglected in the Anglo-Saxon world. I also read a weekly news journal, *L'Espresso*, from cover to cover, trying not to use a dictionary except as a last resort. I watched TV news. And I made some close friends among the Italian English teachers, who gave me information on grammar and usage and help as I needed it. Timely interventions again.

What effects did the Italian experience have on my personal and professional evolution?

a. *I started to think of myself as a member of the ELT discourse community and became more curious about the flood of new ideas coming on stream.*

b. *I realised the power of group action, partly through the LEND experience, partly through IATEFL. Groups facilitated the sharing of ideas and problems, gave support to their members and acted as pressure groups that could change the way things were done.*

c. *I became acutely aware of the resistance to new ideas among conservative, traditional teachers and realised that change cannot be imposed from above, it has to grow from within.*

d. *I learned more about my own ways of tackling a new language and began to understand just how wide the gap was between my personal learning style and the methods espoused by institutional education.*

France (1974–80)

I was next posted to Paris as the first ever English Language Officer with the British Council. I had a free hand to do anything I liked, so I did.

Like Italy, the teaching of English in France was somewhat traditional and teachers rather conservative. The audiovisual movement had made some headway but the qualifying exam, the *baccalauréat*, was still very grammar and text-based. Change was in the air, however, particularly in the tertiary sector, which had also been shaken up by the student unrest of 1968. And there was a growing awareness in big companies that proficiency in English was an essential qualification for business success. Many large companies, such as IBM, set up their own innovative teaching sections. The government also stimulated adult language learning (among other kinds of learning) through the law on the *Formation Continue*, which required firms to contribute financially to the continuing education of their employees. So, conditions were relatively favourable to new ideas.

I worked closely with the Ministry of Education through the system of inspectors at regional and departmental level, running in-service workshops for teachers all over France promoting more communicative activities. In this I was ably assisted by Alan Duff, who I had recruited from Yugoslavia to help me. Alan was to be a key figure in my own development and in the series of books we wrote together. I was also part of a team, led by Guy Capelle and Denis Girard, writing a textbook for the secondary level called *Making Sense*. This brought me in contact with Francoise Grellet, one of the most brilliant and innovative teachers I had ever met. This too led to other books on which we co-operated.

Apart from working with the ministry, I also ran a programme of workshops at the British Council itself. This was aimed at introducing the rich array of new ideas then current in the field to teachers at all levels. Being so close to the UK meant it was easy to bring over key figures to lead workshops, ranging from Henry Widdowson and Chris Brumfit to Chris Candlin, John Sinclair and Dick Allwright. We were also able to offer experimental sessions on the so-called 'designer methods' which were then being vigorously promoted by their proponents: the silent way, suggestopoedia, counselling learning, psycho-drama – you name it, we did it. It is difficult to overestimate the excitement sweeping through our profession at the time – a fertile ferment of ideas and practical applications we have not seen since.

In France, the highly influential work of the CRAPEL in Nancy was having an impact. More innovative and creative coursebook materials such as *All's Well* and the team led by Henri Sagot and Eve Ogonowski were also attracting a following among more progressively minded teachers.

This was also the period in which I really began to read more widely among the books and articles relating to applied linguistics and ELT. I began to attend and present at the annual IATEFL conferences. I also travelled to the USA to present at TESOL and to a memorable Mediterranean institute held at ESADE in Barcelona, where I worked with Chris Brumfit and Earl Stevick (1980). The informal discussions with Earl and Chris were a further, life-changing stimulus to thinking about what I was doing. Earl was a brilliant teacher who opened my eyes to the humanistic approach to teaching, which was then in its infancy, and to the importance of affect.

Another initiative which deeply affected my developing sense of plausibility was the collaboration with the Goethe Institut (teaching of German) and the AUPELF, CREDIF and BELC (teaching of French) in an annual small-scale symposium on a theme of current interest. Manfred Heid, at the Goethe Institut, proved a valued colleague and link with the network of innovation in language teaching in Germany, spearheaded by Hans-Jurgen Piepho and Christoph Edelhoff. Altogether we ran six of these symposia on themes such as Authenticity, Creativity, Roleplay and simulations, Reading comprehension and the Relationship between Society, Schools and Research. All of these were published by the Goethe Institut (Maley, 1994). In retrospect, I can trace the development of my interest in these topics back to these influential meetings.

With the skills and experience of Alan Duff and Francoise Grellet to hand, it was not long before we started our collaboration on publishing books for the ELT market. Chance and good luck again played a hand. Adrian du Plessis at Cambridge University Press was launching a new series of resource books for teachers and invited us to contribute. He was an innovative editor and accepted all our proposals, however risky, in those early years, leading to resource books on drama, sounds, reading, art and visuals, creative dialogues, poetry and literature in general, etc. It was a magic time when everything, briefly, was possible. I also teamed up with Francoise Grellet and Wim Welsing from Holland to write a course for Oxford University Press called *Quartet*. It was highly innovative, and a total flop! But it gave me more valuable experience in materials design and in working as a team.

On the personal level, I was able to log the progress of my daughter, born in Ghana in 1970, first as a trilingual speaker of English, Italian and French, then of English and French. The miracle of child language acquisition posed many questions for me – most of them still unanswered.

What effect did the French experience have on my development?

a. *I had the growing sense of contributing to a group of globally active fellow professionals, rather than simply remaining an onlooker.*

b. *I experienced the power of mutually creative working relationships with individuals and teams.*

c. *I learned a lot about language learning in general through the collaboration with major figures in the teaching of German and French.*

d. *The freedom I enjoyed allowed me to explore in-depth areas that had only vaguely interested me before. These included drama in education, extensive reading, visuals, especially art, the role of music and sound, the use of literature and especially poetry in teaching, games and problem solving and creativity in general.*

e. *I learned a lot about publishing and how to translate ideas into classroom materials which others could use.*

f. *Through my contacts with Earl Stevick in particular, I became convinced by the principles of humanistic education. I finally understood that the best kind of teaching is responding to learners' needs, not forcing a preconceived package on them. So teachers need to 'get out of the light' and let learners learn.*

China (1980–84)

I was next posted to Beijing as First Secretary (Cultural Affairs) at the British Embassy. This was a necessary fiction in order that the British Council could start up in China after its expulsion in 1949. The historical moment was again significant. After the ten years of chaos during the Cultural Revolution, China was beginning to open up again. The Gang of Four had been overthrown and were now on trial and Deng Xiaoping was cautiously implementing the Four Modernisations – one of which was science and technology, including education. A whole generation of Chinese who had been denied further education were now filling the universities, and there were cohorts of students being sent overseas for training, most of whom needed English to pursue their studies. The country was full of so-called 'foreign experts' teaching English, many of whom had no qualification to do so, except a PhD in any subject at all.

My main task was managing aid-funded British teachers in key universities. This involved lengthy and sometimes tedious negotiations with the Ministry of Education and university authorities. The Chinese viewed these highly qualified and experienced teachers as passive linguistic drudges who were there simply to provide traditional teaching fodder for the students. The teachers, by contrast, viewed themselves as active agents of pedagogical change, bringing contemporary perspectives to a hopelessly outdated traditional view of learning. Mediating between these two opposing standpoints taught me a lot about the art of patient and persistent negotiation, and the building of trust in a cross-cultural situation.

I was also charged with inaugurating and managing the Voluntary Service Overseas programme in China. This took me to remote parts of China, where conditions for the young Voluntary Service Overseas teachers were often difficult both materially and psychologically.

A major language learning innovation was the acquisition by China Radio and TV of the BBC TV course *Follow Me*. I collaborated with Hugh Howse of the BBC in persuading the Chinese to purchase *Follow Me* (at a knock-down price). My former assistant at the British Council in France, Kathy Flower, had already presented these programmes in France, so I invited her to come to Beijing to do the same in China. Working in partnership with Hu Wenzhong to present the programmes made *Follow me* an immediate success, and Kathy became the equivalent of a rock star! Arguably, more young Chinese learned English from *Follow Me* than from all the foreign experts put together.

At the embassy I managed to set up a modest resource centre for foreign teachers in China, which was intensively used. I also began to publish and distribute a newsletter as an organ of communication and sharing of information among the foreign teaching community. This was a useful induction which would stand me in good stead in India.

I conducted the piloting of the new English Language Testing System (now the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)) in centres across China. From these small beginnings, IELTS has now become a global business empire, which I now view much more critically than I did at the time. Frankenstein's error feels uncomfortably close to reality.

On the personal level, I continued publishing more titles with Cambridge University Press with Alan Duff. I also became more active in international conferences and in publishing articles in professional journals in China as well as in the West.

I also learned Mandarin Chinese to a reasonable level, thanks to my one-to-one teacher, provided by the Chinese Diplomatic Service Bureau. My teacher was ideal: kind and patient, responsive to my requests and willing to explore his own language with me in, for him, unfamiliar ways.

How did the China experience contribute to my sense of plausibility?

a. *I came to appreciate the need for sensitivity in cross-cultural encounters.*

b. *I found some of my assumptions about communicative methodology challenged, which led me to re-examine the effectiveness of more traditional methods.*

c. *The power of visual media was strongly reinforced, through the success of* Follow Me.

d. *I learned a lot about team-building and the need of teachers for psychological as well as professional support.*

e. *Through my dealings with officials, I learned of the value of long-term building of trust through mutual adjustments over time.*

f. *The* Follow Me *experience strengthened my faith in the value of good luck and being in the right place at the right time.*

g. *Learning Chinese was a challenge which tested my assumptions about the value of memorisation.*

h. *My Chinese teacher reinforced the value of teaching the person, not just the language.*

India (1984–88)

My job in India comprised two roles. I was Director South India, which meant I was responsible for all aspects of the British Council's work in South India, which included running a large office in Madras (now Chennai) and three libraries in Hyderabad, Bangalore and Trivandrum. Additionally, I was responsible for the British Council's English language work across India, with specialist English studies officers in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. In Madras I was ably assisted by the Senior All-India Specialist, Dr NS Prabhu.

Linguistically, India is hugely complex. The official language is Hindi, with English as a second official language. There are 22 other languages used in the states making up India. In schools, generally, Hindi and English are taught in addition to the local state language. So, for example, in Tamil Nadu students would learn Hindi, English and Tamil, in Andhra Pradesh it would be English, Hindi and Telugu, and so on. In practice, English is widely used in administration, the law, commerce, higher education, the media, etc. English is also regarded as the language of advancement and opportunity, and is used to a high degree of proficiency among the middle and upper classes of society.

The politics of English in India is complex and vastly different from in China. Whereas China was teaching English as a foreign language, India had had over three centuries of working contact with the language. In some ways this ensured an easy familiarity with English. In other ways, there was an ambivalence and even a hostility towards English as the language of the erstwhile colonial power. All of this underlined for me the importance of the context in which English is taught.

I will not dwell on the detail of my sojourn in India. But it affected my development in five main ways.

a. *I was greatly influenced by the ideas of Dr NS Prabhu and his proposal of a procedural syllabus based on tasks.*

b. *I was immersed in the complexities of a plurilingual society, in which English had multiple and equivocal roles. Many of my assumptions about English as an international language had to be re-assessed in the light of this.*

c. *I became re-enthused about literature in English. There was a plethora of established and up-and-coming poets, novelists and playwrights in English. I ran two short story competitions with subsequent publication of the winning entries. India also stimulated my first interest in creative writing as a support for language learning.*

d. *It was in India that I first became interested in the importance of the voice for teachers. This emerged from a visit by Patsy Rodenburg, then Voice Coach at the Royal Shakespeare Company. This was an epiphany for me, and led me to develop courses for teachers on voice, and the publication of* The Language Teacher's Voice *(Maley, 2000).*

e. *David Horsburgh, the founder of the revolutionary educational experiment at Neel Bagh, died a week after my arrival in India. But I soon had the opportunity to visit his unconventional school and was deeply affected by his views on institutional education, shared by other thinkers such as Ken Robinson (2016) and John Holt (1982). This transformed my own views on education and the need for radical change.*

Bell at Cambridge (1988–93)

I resigned from the British Council on leaving India to take up the post of Director-General of the Bell Educational Trust in Cambridge, where I stayed for five years. This was mainly a managerial/leadership role.

Bell was widely regarded as one of the top private language teaching institutions in the UK. It ran six schools in southern England which offered year-round courses as well as prestigious summer schools for teachers. It was also involved in overseas projects worldwide, including a big UN Development Programme project in China.

This was really my first encounter with the commodification of English. Though Bell was a charitable trust, it still needed to turn a profit to be re-invested in the trust's activities. Questions of cost-benefit, competition with other providers and sustaining quality were high on the agenda. I learned a lot about business – and about sharp practices in the commercial sector of ELT. This made me acutely uneasy about the negative effects of the commercialisation of language learning.

My time at Bell came at another political turning point with the demise of communism in Russia and in Central Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This coincided with my conviction that, if Bell was to survive, it needed to establish schools outside the UK. Accordingly, we set up schools in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland and developed partnerships with other schools in Italy and Poland. We also set up shop in Thailand and Indonesia.

The belief in the need to ensure honest high quality and in the power of association led to the founding of the European Association of Quality Language Schools (Eaquals), which held its inaugural meeting at Bell.

One of the continuing preoccupations for the Bell teaching staff was the need for constant teacher development to avoid routinisation, turn-off, burnout and complacency. Nurturing and motivating such a group of high-quality teachers with long experience was a constant challenge.

This linked with my own continuing personal development/learning, which was in danger of being sidelined by the administrative demands of my job. I tried to sustain my own learning pathway by writing reviews, mainly for the *ELTJ*, to keep up with current publications. I also continued as Series Editor for the Oxford University Press's *Resource Books for Teachers* (I had started this in 1986), which kept me in touch with new ideas from fellow professionals. I also wrote a regular column on various aspects of ELT for *Practical English Teacher* from 1989 to 1993 and continued to present at conferences worldwide.

I had been elected as President of IATEFL in 1988, which also kept me actively involved with developments in the profession. The political changes in East and Central Europe led to a spate of new IATEFL associate associations in those countries and, for me, a period of intensive travel.

What were the enduring effects of the Bell experience?

a. *Renewed belief in my need for constant exploration and lifelong learning.*

b. *A growing scepticism about the native speaker hegemony in ELT.*

c. *Critical concern at the negative effects of the commodification and commercialisation of English.*

d. *Confirmation of the power of association, through my involvement in Eaquals and IATEFL especially.*

Singapore (1993–98)

With the support of Dr NS Prabhu, who had left India to take up a post at the National University of Singapore, I was appointed Senior Fellow in the Department of English. There, I taught a variety of undergraduate and master's courses, and supervised dissertations and theses.

Besides existing courses, I was encouraged to develop new ones. These included a voice course for theatre studies students, and courses in presentation skills and the teaching of writing. These were all a natural outgrowth from my earlier developing interests. I also developed a master's module on creativity, which served to heighten my evolving interest in that topic.

This was my first experience of regular university teaching. Although I was given a free hand by the department, I developed a sceptical view of the administration of teaching, especially the over-concern with exam grades. I found the way that grades were manipulated to achieve statistical tidiness disconcerting. I also felt highly critical of the requirement for students to write 'research' theses. These were largely a time-consuming formality that contributed nothing to the sum of human knowledge.

There was a lively literary scene in Singapore, and I was able to hear first-hand from many Singaporean and Asian writers. The Regional English Language Centre still ran its annual regional conferences, which enabled me to keep in touch with a wide range of professional contacts. It also had a first-class library.

Singapore had opted for the active moulding of language policy. Although there were four official languages – Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, Malay and English – it was English that was dominant. And this was the result of deliberate policy decisions over the years since independence and separation from Malaysia in 1965. One result was that many of my students were no longer functional in their mother tongues and many households had become English-speaking.

The Singapore experience added these layers of my sense of plausibility to those already laid down:

a. *scepticism about the value attributed to research*

b. *concern at the dominance of institutional factors over educational values*

c. *concern about the social and psychological costs of English replacing vernacular languages*

d. *renewed interest in literature in English and in the range of issues to do with English as an international language*

e. *renewed energy from the sheer joy of teaching.*

Bangkok (2009–14)

On leaving Singapore, I was invited to set up and run a new MA programme in teaching English as a foreign language at the private, Catholic Assumption University in Bangkok. This offered a splendid opportunity to put the past experiences and the conclusions I had drawn from them to the reality test. There were a number of key features to our programme:

- We recruited largely non-native speakers as faculty. These included teachers from Burma, Singapore, Italy, India, Holland and Thailand. My rationale for this was that it reflected the global nature of English and that it put competence above provenance.

- Our students were also drawn from a variety of mainly Asian countries: China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand. My rationale for this was to capitalise on the mix of traditions and cultures as a rich resource for learning from each other.

- Our aim was to offer education of the highest quality. Students were expected to give 100 per cent effort. Needless to say, our initial drop-out rates were high, as some students who came expecting an easy ride faded away.

- To ensure the best quality teachers, I was able to negotiate good salaries and conditions for them. This included relatively few teaching hours, thus allowing them time for personal supervision of students, research, writing and participation in professional events.

- I was also able to design and offer innovative courses that would stretch our students to their limits. These included presentation skills, theory and practice of writing, creative writing, and theory and practice of reading. These derived in part from my experiences in Singapore.

- I reduced to the minimum permitted the importance of grades based on examinations and tests. Students were largely assessed through continuing assessment throughout the course. The teaching practicum was also an important element.

- The effect of all this was to create a living learning community, with a sense of self-pride in its achievements.

After I left, the power of mediocrity and conformism reasserted itself in the administration. The faculty therefore deserted the programme, which was reduced to a shadow of its former self.

How did the Bangkok experience contribute to my sense of plausibility?

a. *It confirmed my belief in offering students creative challenges.*

b. *It demonstrated the importance of treating colleagues with respect and creating space for them to continue their development.*

c. *It also confirmed my belief in the importance of teachers who are competent rather than simply native speakers.*

d. *It amply fulfilled my expectation that students (and faculty) would learn a lot from each other.*

e. *It enabled me to continue to seek out new channels for my own professional growth.*

After leaving Bangkok, I officially 'retired', though I continued to write for publication, to act as Visiting Professor in some universities and to participate in workshops and conferences.

Causes and effects

I shall now try to identify the influences on my professional make-up and set out the characteristics they have helped to bring into being. First I shall list the major strands of interest, then acknowledge the personalities who have most influenced me. Finally, I shall attempt to enumerate the beliefs, values and practices that characterise my current state.

Emerging strands

Looking back over this trajectory, I can now identify a number of strands that have woven themselves into the fabric of my professional profile:

a. **Aesthetic approach and creativity:** I have become deeply committed to an artistic concept of language learning. This has included literature, storytelling, drama, music, art and creative writing in particular. The theory and practice of creativity in general is a constantly developing interest (Maley and Peachey, 2015; Maley and Kiss, 2017).

I have consistently advocated an aesthetic approach through publications. And in 2014 I co-founded the C Group (Creativity for Change in Language Education): http://thecreativitygroup. weebly.com

b. **Creative writing:** This has become a central strand in my life. It brings together my own life as a writer with my beliefs in the power of creative writing to unleash unsuspected capabilities in students and to build self-esteem and motivation among them. The Asian Teacher–Writer group (2003–14) was one way of furthering these ideas: https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/cw/index. html

c. **Voice:** The absence of voice education for language teachers is a scandal, so since the 1980s I have been engaged in a one-man crusade to put voice on the map. How is it possible that the profession has neglected this key resource for so long? In 2000 I published a book on the subject (Maley, 2000). Voice is key to how we establish the learning atmosphere and shape the learning experience. It is an essential part of the teacher's classroom 'presence'.

d. **Reading:** I have long been an advocate of the value of extensive reading as a key factor in language acquisition. I was a co-founder of the Extensive Reading Foundation (www. erfoundation.org) in 2003. I wrote a number of graded readers combining interesting content with accessible language (Maley, 1997, 1999). I also believe strongly that teachers would do well to read widely outside their own narrow professional literature. 'Reading maketh a full man ...' as Bacon wrote. So, between 2009 and 2014, I wrote a regular column ('Over the Wall') in *English Teaching professional* dedicated to introducing books from outside the language teaching ghetto. Among other things this was in the hope of interesting teachers in the idea of 'feeder fields'.

e. **Global issues:** My experiences in Ghana, India, China and Thailand in particular had alerted me to the importance of including global issues in language teaching programmes, if for no other reason than that they offer stimulating and relevant content. These issues are in any case important in the context of broader education, where we are educators and not merely language instructors with a duty to raise awareness and take action. This is why I helped start the Global Issues Special Interest Group within IATEFL in 1994. I also co-edited a recent book of practical approaches to these issues (Maley and Peachey, 2017).

f. **Power of association:** Teachers who form groups offer each other a framework of support in the face of their daily problems and strength in dealing with future challenges and developing innovative solutions. All along I have seen this as a key feature of teacher development. My experiences as a member of IATEFL and its special interest groups, Eaquals, the Extensive Reading Foundation, the Asian Teacher–Writer Group and the C Group have only served to strengthen this belief.

g. **Materials development:** The power of materials writing as a form of teacher development was first realised by Brian Tomlinson (2003), who founded the Materials Development Association in 1993. Issues in materials design have been a central part of my professional life since my earliest publications (Maley, 2003).

h. **Spontaneity:** I have increasingly come to believe that formal training of teachers alone is inadequate because it is based on the idea that classrooms are predictable. Adrian Underhill and I have been exploring ways of bringing this into the open as a topic for discussion on teacher development and training (Maley and Underhill, 2012; Underhill, 2014).

i. **My critical strand:** There are some aspects of our profession that I regard with acute scepticism and I have consistently attempted to draw attention to them through articles and conference presentations. They include:

- The imbalance of power between the academic/research community on the one hand and the teaching community on the other. The high claims of the former are largely unsubstantiated and the merits of classroom teachers are routinely undervalued (Maley, 2016). See also Kini and Podolsky (2016) for a survey of research into the value of experience.

- The spread of English with its concomitant commodification and undermining of other languages.

- The coining of faddish notions, such as English as a lingua franca, which serve no good purpose except to promote an academic niche community and are in any case unnecessary to account for the phenomenon of English used internationally (Maley, 2011).

- The uncritical adoption of technology to solve pedagogical problems. I have argued for a more measured approach to the use of technology.

- The hegemony of testing within ELT, especially the large-scale commercialisation of tests. When the testing tail wags the teaching dog, it can only be at the expense of the dog.

- The bureaucratisation of institutional education. Whenever the interests of real education and bureaucratic convenience collide, it is always the latter which win out. I have tried to promote the ideas of educational iconoclasts as a way of countering this tendency (Freire, 1972; Holt, 1982; Horsburgh, 2004; Robinson, 2016).

Influences

This is a selection of key people whose influence I can clearly define. There are, of course, unnumbered others who have influenced me in less personal and more subtle ways.

My teacher of French at secondary school, John Carr, opened the window of foreign languages for me. He changed my life and to him I owe my lifelong passion for learning and using languages.

My teacher of English, Gwyneth Lloyd, instilled in me the love of my own language and its literature. Her mellifluous Welsh voice still rings in my inner ear 65 years later.

Alan Duff, my co-author, was the ideal sounding board and partner in the hatching of innovative ideas. He was a poet, translator and brilliant partner in intellectual adventure.

My editor at Cambridge University Press, Adrian du Plessis, was an inspiration and stout supporter of me (and Alan) in our early years as writers. He effectively transformed the publishing of ELT at Cambridge University Press and was a fund of wisdom and advice. I learned a great deal about publishing from him.

Dr NS Prabhu had a great talent for thinking the unthinkable and then implementing his radical ideas (1987, 1988, 1990). He was a transformational thinker who helped me develop a critical stance toward conventional thinking about language learning and teaching.

Robert O'Neill, that brilliant eccentric who was the pioneer of new-style coursebooks in the 1970s, taught me so much about developing materials. He wrote brilliant dialogues, combining wit and humour with accessible and learnable language. He was also outstandingly generous to novice teachers, and a living example of a dedicated mentor.

Earl Stevick (1980) opened my eyes to the central position of the human in teaching/learning. He demonstrated the importance of lightness of touch and responsiveness to learners' diverse needs. He taught me how to stand back so that the students would have a space to learn in.

John Fanselow taught me the power of careful, detailed observation and showed how small changes in teaching can have disproportionately large effects (1978, 1992). Another truly radical thinker, and major influence.

Andrew Wright showed me the power of storytelling, to which he has devoted his life. We are the stories we embody and to harness this to language learning is a major insight. Working with him in performance and on publications, as well as engaging in many conversations, has enriched my ideas on teaching.

Jayakaran Mukundan has been an inspiration through his innovative vision of conferences as opportunities for teachers to engage with the aesthetic side of teaching. We have also worked together on creative writing workshops in Asia, where his mercurial ideas and infectious energy were an inspiration. Like O'Neill, he is also generous to novice teachers.

Adrian Underhill has been a generator of ideas for me. Our regular meetings over lunch in Rye have been truly mutual learning conversations from which ideas about the importance of spontaneity and improvisation have emerged (Underhill, 2014).

Summary of beliefs, values and practices

Based on the foregoing, it is now possible to enumerate some of the elements of my evolving practical philosophy of teaching and learning languages.

My beliefs about language

Learning a new language is good for me. It keeps my mind active. It shines new light on the human condition. It affords me infinite pleasure.

The more languages I learn, the easier it becomes.

Massive amounts of reading is one of the keys to learning, sustaining and developing another language.

I can learn a lot alone but can profit from timely and appropriate intervention by teachers or mentors. I can also learn a lot from my peers.

Keeping my own language in good condition is also important. I do this through reading and writing creatively. It is good to remind ourselves that we never completely master any language – even our mother tongue.

About teaching

There is no best method (Prabhu, 1990).

I need to teach the person(s) in front of me, not just the language as a subject. (Treat the patient not just the disease.)

All students are individuals with different needs and diverse ways of learning.

I need to be aware of the total context of my teaching: geographical, political, sociological and material.

I must never underestimate the capacity of my students to surprise me. And I must give them the space and time to unlock their creative resources.

I know I need to establish rapport with a new group within seconds of starting the first class with them.

After that, I must rapidly build a learning community in which trust and good-humoured playfulness are paramount, and where praise and blame are largely irrelevant – what Wajnryb (2003) calls a 'storied class'.

Teaching is not just about the subject but should include more broadly educational features such as global issues (Maley and Peachey, 2017).

My job is to provide 'compelling' content, to offer engaging activities and to provide useful feedback and support to my students.

It does not help to teach harder: learning is done by learners, not by me. I need to listen and observe closely so as to tailor my responses to their emerging needs. I need to learn to 'non-teach'.

I must prepare and make plans but must then be ready to throw them away as unforeseen learning opportunities occur. I must learn to 'go with the flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

I must be a role model and show my practical commitment to what I do. I must also be willing to engage in the tasks I set my students.

About personal development

Luck is important, including being in the right place at the right time. But we also make our own luck through our attitudes. It is not just what happens to me but what I decide to do with it that counts. And it helps to be prepared to work with what happens.

Friends and colleagues are one of my most valuable resources. It is in free-ranging 'learning conversations' when new ideas and insights are sparked.

The power of groups in offering psychological support, in sharing information and in developing solidarity has been crucial for me.

Hard work helps – but I also need to be intellectually, emotionally and psychologically alert so that I notice what opportunities happen along the way.

Concluding remarks. So what …?

I have tried to amplify Prabhu's notion of 'the teacher's sense of plausibility' with reference to my own history in language and language teaching. But why did I bother to do this?

1. Socrates reportedly said: 'The unexamined life is not worth living' (ὁ … ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ). I believe that retrospective reflection on our professional development can be highly revealing. It can help strip away unexamined suppositions and prejudices and this can feed into changes in our current practice.

2. As I mentioned in the introduction, I believe that there is an over-emphasis on teacher training as an algorithmic system, and that not enough attention is paid to the human, personal side of learning and teaching. Regular group sharing and discussion of individual senses of plausibility can be highly rewarding as part of a teacher training programme.

3. Such a programme could draw on a number of published sources, too. These include Lew Barnett's *The Way We Are* (1988), a collection of teachers' reports on their histories as teachers. Esther Ramani's 'Theorizing from the classroom' (1987) is an early example of looking at teachers' conceptualisation of their practices. Ephraim Weintraub's ideas in *Ghosts behind the blackboard* (1989) highlight the way we are all in some sense replicating the way we ourselves were taught. There is also the classic account of a language teacher's life in Appel (1995). Pickett's survey of experienced language learners' personal accounts is also suggestive and could be replicated (1978). The recent collection from Floris and Renandya, *Inspirational Stories for English language Classrooms* (2019), would also be a good resource for discussion and reflection. My own account of activities to promote teacher creativity might also be the starting point for further work (Maley and Kiss, 2017). There is also an interesting ongoing project in China run by Richard Young which should yield useful results (Young, 2016; Sun, Wei and Young, 2019).

I conclude with Young's comments in his study proposal (2016):

Very few previous studies in applied linguistics have addressed the synergy between the personal history of teachers and learners and the discourse of language learning in the classroom …

It is time to change that.

Alan Maley. Revised, May 2019.

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Part 2:
Continuing professional development activities

The activities presented are in the same order as the chapters they are based on in the book.

The intention is to offer readers who wish to follow up themes and ideas in the book some practical activities they might like to try out. Some of them would fit well into teacher training or teacher development groups. Others are best done individually, alone.

The contributions are very varied. They range from quite short activities that could be done in a single session to very extended series of activities that could form the basis for a whole course or series of teacher development sessions.

You, the reader, will be best-placed to decide which of them might be appropriate for your own circumstances, and how best to implement them.

Introduction: 'My teacher' questionnaire

Alan Maley

There are only two questions. It will be most helpful if you can answer them in some detail, possibly including pertinent anecdotes and specific memories.

Question 1: Is there a particular teacher (or teachers) from your past that you remember with particular affection, appreciation or gratitude? Can you describe what effect or influence this has had on you as a person, and on your beliefs and practice as a teacher?

Question 2: Is there a particular teacher (or teachers) who you still recall with distaste or dislike? Has this affected your life as a person or as a teacher in any way?

You may find it helpful to relate your memories (both positive and negative) to some of the following factors:

■ physical appearance

■ voice quality

■ mannerisms (verbal and physical)

■ actions

■ presence/personality

■ outside interests

■ attitudes towards:

  ● the subject they taught

  ● themselves

  ● their students

  ● life in general.

1

The teacher's sense of plausibility in teacher development and teacher training

Robert Bellarmine

As a junior trainer at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, in 1980, I gave a presentation provocatively called 'Can Teaching be Taught?'. I sincerely sought for an answer. For, as a trainee and as a trainer, I found that most training programmes developed trainees' knowledge structure, yet scarcely touched their belief/value structures, and therefore failed utterly to affect their classroom practice. Until today, I have not found a single training programme that has made serious attempts to alter trainee teachers' belief structures. Here is one idea.

Trainees complete a questionnaire

1. At this stage in your life, how well are you **aware** of your 'sense of plausibility'? On the ten-point scale below, **circle** your awareness level.

Null 0-----1 -----2 ----3 -----4 ----- 5

Moderate-----6 ------7 ------8 ------9 ------10 Full

2. As a **learner** of English, what did you believe as important factors of effective English language learning/teaching? **Mention two.**

3. As a **teacher** of English, what do you believe as important factors of effective English language teaching? **Mention two.**

4. Recall an important **classroom incident** in your life that contributed a significant element to your sense of plausibility.

    I. Jot down a few aspects of that incident to help you narrate it in the next part of this activity.

    II. Write below one or two lesson(s) it taught you.

5. As a teacher or trainer, which **three** of the following contributed to developing your 'sense of plausibility'? **Name** the sources and **specify one** contribution **from each of them.**

Trainers: ....

Books or journals: ....

Colleagues: ....

Specialists: ....

Any other: ....

6. How often have you succeeded in underpinning your classroom practice with your sense of plausibility? **Circle** your choice.

    a) Never   b) Sometimes   c) Often

    d) Very often   e) Always

7. If you have chosen a response other than a), **mention two** factors in the situation that encouraged you to faithfully put your sense of plausibility into practice.

Interactions with others' senses of plausibility

8. Think of a situation when your sense of plausibility conflicted with one or two features of the sense of plausibility of another teacher/trainer/specialist/ proposer of a method. Specify their name and position, and the situation.

Person: ....

Situation: ....

Describe how your sense of plausibility conflicted with the element(s) of the sense of plausibility of the other person(s):

9. Think of an ELT method (old or new) you have recently been exposed to. Which two elements of the method did you find unacceptable?

Group work

10. Compare your responses to the above questionnaire with the responses of the participants in your group.

11. Using the following questions, share the lessons learned from the contact situations specified above.

In the conflict situation(s) what helped you to express your disagreement?

What hindered you from expressing your disagreement?

12. **Classroom incident:** Refer to your response to 4 above. Briefly describe the incident to the members of your group. Mention the lesson which extended your sense of plausibility.

Plenary session

13. Recorders-cum-reporters report succinctly what transpired in their groups.

2

My quest to understand learning and teaching

John F Fanselow

Two themes in teacher preparation programmes

There are two themes in all of my conversations with teachers. One is to remind them of the complexity of interactions and causes and effects. Ministries of education and publishers believe that A causes B, which does not reflect complexity. 'We have a new series of textbooks which will lead all students to be proficient. We have tests to check their progress.' In my experience, big changes, new programmes and textbook series stultify teacher creativity and initiative. They also fail. These dictates not only fly in the face of Prabhu's sense of plausibility but are also ineffectual.

Another theme that pervades my teaching is that it is teachers, together with their students and peers, who are the ones who have to explore ways to understand their teaching. 'Believe nothing I say nor what the so-called "experts" say. Look at what is happening before you! Record and transcribe and analyse one-page transcripts of three-minute recordings.' Also, ask your students to comment on what you are doing and invite their suggestions for alternatives. One teacher discovered that the students found her perfume very distracting! So not all suggestions are related to the activities we use but can be equally important.

Activities for teacher preparation programmes

As you will see below, though I focus on the analysis of what we do as the foundation of all the activities in teacher education programmes, there are a range of other activities that supplement classroom analysis.

Though I have many activities in mind when I start any teacher preparation programme or workshop, as you do, I suggest you start, as I do, by asking the participants to write at least three questions they have about their teaching. Tell the participants that you are not going to answer their questions but rather use them as the agenda for your sessions. Of course, as the workshops or courses continue, participants write more questions.

To explore their questions, consider the five types of activities that follow below. They, as well as the topics, are suggestions not imperatives. Participants select the topics of interest. While in some cases participants will want to read about some of the same topics, do not prescribe particular sources. As participants share what they have read and experienced they enrich each other's thinking.

With regards to the topics in activities 1 and 2, I suggest to participants that each one limit the topics to two. Each participant can learn about other topics when each shares what they discovered from the readings they selected. Of course, those who read more about each topic will have a deeper understanding, but those who hear and read reports from others will get some sense of areas they have not focused on.

Activities 1 and 2

1. **Discussing and writing about readings (at least two prior to 1980), lectures* or videos related to TESOL:** methods, grammar, phonology, second language acquisition, language testing, vocabulary, reading, lesson planning, sociolinguistics, observation, etc.

2. **Discussing and writing about readings, lectures or videos unrelated to TESOL:** anthropology, history of education, philosophy of education, feminism, mysteries, bullying, poverty, ecology, health, adult education, reflective teaching, analysis of interaction, economics, etc.

Teachers whose first language is not English often say that they found it difficult to understand the readings. Suggest that they re-read items at least three times.

Teachers who do this report that they understand more after three readings, but that there was not enough time in the week to read everything three times.

Tell both those whose first language is English and those whose first language is not English to select one-third of the readings and read each three times rather than all the readings once. In my experience, they all reported that they understood more.

Well, why wouldn't they? When a person whose first language is English sees 'scaffolding' the person thinks of construction, not Vygotsky. How many of those whose first language is English have read or heard words like 'collocation', 'affective filter', the 'silent period', to name a few bits of jargon we are subjected to? Much in our field is as new to those whose first language is English as it is to those whose first language is not English.

*I mention lectures because they are such a large part of many workshops and courses. But I would hope that there would not be more than a couple of lectures since the retention rate for lectures is around ten per cent – the most inefficient method of teaching yet devised.

Activities 3 and 4

3. **Doing activities unrelated to learning languages:** singing, dance and movement, magic, language learning, clowning, cooking, knitting and sewing, drama, yoga, computing skills, touch-typing, etc.

4. **Teaching language:** in small groups, pairs, classes, using English or a teacher's first language if it is not English. The proportion of teaching of languages in 4 and other areas such as singing in 3 can be negotiated. One purpose of having participants experience singing is to enable them to integrate the learning of other skills with the learning of languages.

Activities 5 and 6

5. **Recording, transcribing and analysing participants' teaching both in non-language activities in 3 and language teaching in 4 during the workshop:** As teachers analyse interactions in different classes, they begin to see similarities and differences between different types of teaching and try activities they experienced in singing and other lessons in their language classes.

6. **Ditto for activity 5 but done after the workshop or courses have been completed:** The only way to see the extent to which participants have benefited in any way from the readings and activities and been able to apply them to their teaching is for them to record, transcribe and analyse what they and their students are doing after they have completed the on-site workshop or courses.

I invite you to write down the percentage of time you think would be most useful to devote to the six activities.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....

Personally, I would use these proportions:

1. ten per cent
2. ten per cent
3. 15 per cent
4. 40 per cent
5. 15 per cent
6. ten per cent.

In selecting a workshop or course, look at the five activities I list and see the proportion devoted to each one. Then, select a programme that fits your needs. Some may prefer 90 per cent reading or listening to lectures and discussing and writing about them. There are loads of these. This is the model of teacher preparation in the world, unfortunately.

Finding a programme with the proportions I suggest is almost like a fool's errand. This is in spite of the fact that what we read and listen to and write about teaching has not been shown to have very much effect on what we actually do. But a focus on reading and writing critiques of articles has the advantage of making teaching look respectable to some, and the more complex it is made the more prestige accrues for many. And, of course, these are intellectually challenging. I just think that the balance needs to be more on the doing side of the scale.

Challenging some standard ideas about teaching – for discussion

Of course, the range of questions teachers ask at the beginning of workshops and courses is broad. But there are certain ones that come up which reflect activities and beliefs that have been in vogue for the last couple of decades. Here are some precepts that I think reflect questions I have been hearing most frequently. They contain most of the standard ideas. (They are not recommendations – they are for discussion.)

1. Setting goals, planning lessons and giving tests to determine whether the goals have been met are the essence of good teaching.

2. Speaking to our students as a main way to cause listening and understanding on their part.

3. Telling students they do not have to understand every word we say; they just have to get the gist.

4. Telling students that mistakes are OK and when they speak to me or each other they do not have to say the sentences correctly. They just have to express the gist.

5. Teaching grammar rules and defining words are two important tasks for us as teachers.

6. Asking students to discuss a reading or listening passage in pairs or small groups, sharing their opinions and experiences is the best way for students to develop their speaking and listening skills. There is no need to record these conversations to check the accuracy of their language or their ideas.

7. Having students take standardised tests to measure their language ability is the best way to evaluate students' language abilities.

8. Preparing students for multiple-choice standardised tests by explaining why three choices are incorrect and one is correct, which is standard practice in Test of English for International Communication and Test of English as a Foreign Language preparation courses, is very productive.

9. Saying 'very good, great job,' clapping, etc. after student responses or repeating what the students say or saying correctly what they said incorrectly, provides positive feedback which students need to continue to learn.

10. Doing pre-reading and listening activities such as defining key words, asking students to say what they think the text is about, brainstorming, etc. and doing post-reading and listening activities such as asking questions generated by the teacher or the textbook is very productive.

11. Following the same routine every day with no variation helps students feel comfortable and secure.

12. It is the job of teachers to motivate students.

13. We have to know a great deal of jargon to teach effectively. To be a competent teacher we must master the jargon of the field: *recasting, scaffolding, extensive reading and listening, gist, comprehensible input, output, rough tuning, short term memory, slips, task cycle, activation of prior knowledge,* etc.

14. Native speakers of English are superior to non-native speakers of English.

15. During our classes, we are aware of what we say and do and are aware of what each of our students says and does. That is why we can discuss what we have done without analysing transcripts of our interactions.

Suggested further reading

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*There are a number of mystery authors I have not listed who have been very influential to my thinking such as Agatha Christie, Michael Connelly, Colin Dexter, Patricia Cornwell, Dashiell Hammett, PD James, Sue Grafton, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe, Dorothy L Sayers, Georges Simenon and RD Wingfield, to name a few.

Peter Tremayne (author of the Sister Fidelma mysteries from which I adapted the reading passage *A short trip in 1800*), I use in many chapters in *Small Changes in Teaching, Big Results in Learning*:

> Well of course one huge difference is that when teachers explore, we are not trying to discover murderers. Another is that there is no physical violence in most of our analyses of what we and our students do. Some teachers point out that there is sometimes emotional violence that we begin to see when we look over and over again at the same video clip. And most mysteries deal with adults rather than primary or secondary school students.

3

Meditation techniques

Thomas SC Farrell

Here are four meditative techniques: insight meditation, mantra, visualisation and movement meditation for the mindful teacher (Farrell, 2015).

Insight meditation (or *vipassanā*, which means to 'see' things as they really are) allows us to focus on what happens in each moment as it happens. We can accomplish this by just focusing on our breathing: when we breathe in and out we just concentrate on this act and nothing else. Then as we focus on our breathing, we can gain insight into the 'self' as we watch various thoughts and emotions come and go because we do not react to any of them. Eventually these thoughts and emotions get weaker and finally disappear. In this way we are practising insight meditation.

Mantra means 'word' and the meditative activity is to use a 'word' repeatedly (out loud or internally) while either sitting or in motion as we continue with our normal daily activities. Singing out loud could also be a form of mantra meditation as the act of singing can lead to an inner calmness and also be a way of relaxing the mind (and even the body) before teaching a class. Sing your favorite song out loud ten minutes before entering your next class. After you sing the song, note any physical or mental changes before and after singing. You could even get your students to sing out loud as well and see if their disposition towards learning has changed.

Visualisation is a meditative technique where you visualise a place (new or old) or a task and remain in a general state of openness while using this place as a type of sanctuary where you feel safe because this sanctuary is unique to you. As you see yourself inside this sanctuary, you become calm and just sit there and totally relax. Because this sanctuary is unique to you, it reflects who you are as a person as you 'see'

yourself relax and then begin to notice your personal visualisation. We gain knowledge of the self as a result of meditating on our visualisations because these too are unique to the person who is meditating. You can try this before class and see if your attitudes (to your teaching, your students and learning) change. You could also get your students to try it through English as it can all contribute to learning.

Movement meditation includes any body movement as meditation. The most popular types of movement meditation include yoga and its many different forms, as well as tai-chi, but even a simple routine such as walking or jogging can be considered movement meditation. My own preference for movement meditation is my practice of the discipline of Taekwondo, a Korean martial art. I studied this wonderful art when I was in Korea for 18 years and, for me, the calming nature of the pre-stretching routine along with the practice of kicking and other body movement and postures allows for enhanced awareness of self through attention to mind, body and spirit while in action. Apart from the physical benefits of feeling 'high' after intense movement (the effect increased endorphins in the brain), I also have noticed that any negative pre-practice thoughts and energy have been fully transformed into positive thoughts and energy as I go through the movements. Teachers can do simple stretching exercises or whatever body movements that relax body and mind before they enter a class, or they can take a walk/jog during their lunch hour and experience meditation through movement. Try some movement activities before you enter your next class and note any physical and mental changes before and after your movements. You can also have your students move during class to get them focused. This is especially useful for teachers of young learners.

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4

Stories and poems

Claudia Mónica Ferradas

So how many 'stories' did you read in my chapter? What are the implications for teacher training? Or are they simply anecdotal and ornamental? Do they resonate with you? If you are a trainer, invite trainees to reflect on this and share their own stories.

You can take my 'maté' anecdote as a stepping stone to produce an example of non-linear planning. Invite colleagues and trainees to discuss whether they know of rituals that resemble the South American maté. If they come from South America, how does the ritual apply to their local context? If they are from other parts of the world, what does the ritual have in common with local practices, if anything? How could they use the maté as the core of a unit they could link to the learning outcomes they expect to achieve?

Following Casamassima (2017), invite them to identify the following unit contents for a specific group of learners:

- **thematic content:** the maté tradition in South America/welcoming rituals in different cultures/ drinks in different parts of the world (depending on their interests)

- **linguistic content:**
  - **grammar:** e.g. language to give instructions, description, comparatives
  - **lexis:** words to explain things that have no equivalent in English (e.g. spout, straw, filter, to describe 'bombilla')
  - **discourse genres:** webpages and YouTube videos showing how to prepare a maté (to be compared), among others

- **strategic content:** searching for information; critical comparison of sources to get to an accurate set of instructions

- **intercultural content:** drinks/welcoming rituals in different contexts/concepts of hospitality/ politeness when rejecting an offer.

As an example, it may be interesting to discuss an extract from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) where they pass the kola nut in Nigeria to welcome guests. Ugwu, a house boy employed by a professor living on campus, remembers the guests he used to wait on:

> *He soon knew the regular guests and brought out their drinks before Master asked him to. There was*

> *Dr Patel, the Indian man who drank Golden Guinea beer mixed with Coke. Master called him Doc. Whenever Ugwu brought out the kola nut, Master would say, 'Doc, you know the kola nut does not understand English', before going on to bless the kola nut in Igbo. Dr Patel laughed each time, with great pleasure, leaning back on the sofa and throwing his short legs up as if it were a joke he had never heard before. After Master broke the kola nut and passed the saucer around, Dr Patel always took a lobe and put it into his shirt pocket; Ugwu had never seen him eat one* (2006: 18).

- What is a kola nut? Can you find pictures on the web that illustrate this scene?

- Why doesn't Dr Patel refuse the kola nut lobe?

- What values are behind this practice?

- How does this compare with maté? What do the rituals in Nigeria and Argentina/Uruguay have in common?

- And with your own local customs?

Encourage trainees to create a graphic organiser to discuss how the different components will be organised. What is the unit about (what is the narrative)? How many different ways of approaching the unit can they think of? How much flexibility do the components offer to go from one to the next and return to the previous one when necessary? What task would the components lead to – a presentation on different customs? A guide for travellers with advice on relevant situations? Explanatory videos?

Both the description of a drink from South America and a custom from Nigeria lead us to the question of 'world Englishes' in the classroom.

For example, take the poem 'Talking Turkeys' by Benjamin Zephaniah:

https://benjaminzephaniah.com/books/talking-turkeys/?doing_wp_cron=1547424122.74601697921 75292968750

There are YouTube recordings of the poet performing it live at a poetry festival and for primary school students. The poem, whose personification of a turkey makes it quite funny, describes the custom of eating turkey at the Christmas table from the perspective of a vegan poet:

> *Be nice to yu turkeys dis Christmas*
> *Cos' turkeys just wanna hav fun*
> *Turkeys are cool. Turkeys are wicked*
> *An every turkey has a Mum* (Zephaniah, 1995)*.*

The poem not only raises issues such as cruelty to animals but also consumerism, ecological concerns and different ways of celebrating religious festivals. In short, it offers a number of thematic links to the texts already mentioned and opens up new connections with other topics. Very often teachers like the poem and appreciate its potential but reject it on the grounds that its spelling reproduces the Anglo-Jamaican accent of the poet – not a good model for students, as it is not standard English.

Rejecting the poem on these grounds is in open contradiction to the aims and principles of an intercultural approach, which is meant to develop awareness of linguistic diversity and empower students to understand different varieties of the language they are learning for international communication. Although the intercultural approach has been central in educational documents for 20 years, it has not always found its way into ELT materials or ELT classroom practice.

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5

Three activities

Christine CM Goh

1. Of the three types of professional development opportunity, which one do you like best?

   ■ Formal and certificated.

   ■ Contextualised and work-based.

   ■ Individual and self-paced.

2. Think of an area of language teaching that you are passionate about. Draw up a simple plan for how you can develop yourself professionally through all three types of learning.

3. Think of an activity or teaching technique that you tried in your classroom but did not seem to yield the success you had hoped for. Describe this activity or technique.

   Give some reasons why you think it did not work and why you have not tried it again.

   If you were to try out this activity or teaching technique again, what would you do differently to ensure greater success?

6

Using the past to frame the present: a teacher I liked/disliked

Yueguo Gu

In this activity, participants are invited to recall a specific incident with a teacher from their own past learning – something that has remained a vivid memory and has had a lasting impact on the way they themselves teach.

■ You can start by sharing one of your own experiences. For example:

Even 55 years later today, I still remember this teacher as being 'nasty'. I still remember his name and the way he looked. He made me stand in front of the class, with my nose pressed against the blackboard, while he told the class that I was no longer the monitor of the class. He called me the naughtiest boy of all! I was deeply humiliated and completely lost face.

This is what happened. I had a twin brother. We were in the same class (Grade 3 in 1964). We were practising Chinese calligraphy. My family was so poor then that we could not afford a real ink stand so I used the bottom of a broken bowl I picked up in the rubbish bin as a make-do ink stand. My twin brother did not have one, so he snatched mine and ran away. I chased after him, armed with a piece of broken bowl. A classmate was entering the classroom, and we accidentally bumped into each other, head-on. My 'weapon', the piece of the broken bowl, cut his hand, totally by accident!

My Grade 3 teacher did not even allow me to explain what really happened. Before the incident, I was a model student, and the monitor of the class. My self-esteem was quite high. All of a sudden, I was made the naughtiest boy of all! I was dumped into hell. I felt wronged and started hating that teacher.

What did I learn from this when I became a teacher myself? I determined always to listen carefully and patiently to what students say, even if they complain. And I never jump to conclusions or make hasty and groundless judgements about students!

■ Then ask the trainees to think back over their own experiences as learners. Ask them to focus on one experience that has remained a vivid memory for them. They make notes about this, then share their experiences in groups of four.

■ Next, ask them to reflect on how this experience has impacted on the way they themselves teach – and discuss this with the other group members.

If possible, ask them to recall what aspects of the character of the teacher concerned they found most unlikable.

Note: The experience I have described was negative. This is partly because we tend to recall negative experiences more clearly – and learn more from them. However, you could equally well cite a very positive experience.

■ In later sessions, you could focus on related topics, such as:

● How did I learn my mother tongue/another language? What were the main problems?

● Languages I like/dislike – why?

● Good/bad moments in learning a language.

● A good/disastrous recent teaching moment.

● A book, idea, talk or conversation that made me think and changed the way I teach now.

7

Song quotes, show and tell, and a demonstration lesson

Jennifer Joy Joshua

Activity 1: Quotes in songs – an activity for novice teachers with one year of experience

Teachers find a song with lyrics that describe what they felt about their first year of teaching. It does not need to be a whole song – a line or phrase will do. If possible, ask them to bring it to play at the end of the session. If they do not have a recording, they can sing or speak their lyric. This helps to create a casual atmosphere which bonds the group together. Playing the songs usually creates a celebratory atmosphere. (Adapted from Professor Gwen Stewart's song speech, Miami Dade College.)

Activity 2: It's my bag – for experienced teachers with five to ten years of teaching experience

Ask teachers to find a bag (any bag) and fill it with one or two items that remind them of how they felt about their teaching of English as an additional language to their group of learners. They bring their bags to the reflection session, and explain their items to their classmates. The items that they choose usually turn out to be inspiring visual aids that bring out some insightful comments. (Adapted from a speech exercise provided by Professor James Wolf, 1998.)

Activity 3: Learning a new language – an activity for teachers with fewer than five years of experience

Organise a demonstration lesson where the teacher teaches English as a foreign language to a group of young learners who are non-English language speakers. After watching the demonstration lesson trainees reflect on the experience by answering the following questions:

- What have I gained from this lesson?
- Was this activity beneficial to my professional development? Why?
- How will this impact on my professional practice?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of this activity?
- Do I have any skills or knowledge gaps that require action in future CPD planning?

8

Reflective activity

Kuchah Kuchah

Find two teachers you do not normally work with and ask each of them individually to tell you the story of a very successful lesson they have taught in the last few months. What happened during the lesson? What activities were students involved in and what were the outcomes? Why do the teachers think the lesson was successful? Take notes as they tell their different stories and compare their individual stories. What are the similarities and differences between their individual narratives and how do these relate to your own experiences? What can you learn from the two teachers and what might you share with them from your own experience?

9

Getting started

Péter Medgyes

At the beginning of my course in preservice training, we do the following set of tasks:

■ Answer the following questions:

- Which teacher of yours do you remember most vividly? Explain why you remember them.

- Were they a good teacher too? If yes, identify five of their characteristics. Which of them do you find the *most* important feature?

- You must have had bad teachers, too. List five of their most harmful attributes.

- In your opinion, which of these nouns best apply to teaching? It is a *job, profession, calling, mission, vocation, duty, business, pursuit, career, occupation* or *work*. And which ones the least? (You may mark more than one word.) Justify your choice.

■ What are the special features of the good non-native teacher? They prepare lists individually, then compare them in pairs before general class discussion.

Here are some of the points I would expect to be raised, though there will be others for sure:

- *Aware* of who they are and how this relates to what they do. This includes grammatical, pragmatic and intercultural awareness, awareness of individual differences, and awareness of the strategies available to facilitate the students' as well as their own learning process.

- *Reflective*, which enables them to correct their wrong decisions and enhance their technical repertoire.

- *Autonomous*, capable of making informed decisions in classroom situations. They are self-confident, curious, flexible, dedicated and eager to collaborate with others.

- *Ready to change*, which implies that they do not regard change as a hindrance but rather as a challenge.

■ What do you think is the meaning of the following quotes? Discuss with a partner and report back to the class.

- 'Teachers are not just machines, but real human beings, with feelings, needs and identities of their own, as well as families and other demands on their time and energy' (Carol Griffiths).

- 'The best teacher is the one who is reborn out of his own ashes every September, a feat which indeed requires a measure of witchcraft' (Maurice Antier).

- A teacher is 'like all other teachers, like some other teachers, like no other teachers' (Eric Hoyle).

- 'Teachers are largely self-made' (Dan Lortie).

- 'Born teachers do exist, but their successes tend to be born and die with them' (John Dewey).

- 'Teaching, real teaching, is – or ought to be – a messy business' (Harry Crews).

- 'You don't teach a subject; you teach yourself' (Anonymous).

- Any teacher who can be replaced by a machine should be' (Arthur C Clarke).

- 'We teach people, not languages' (Mercer and Gkonou).

10

'Every teacher is a materials developer'

Freda Mishan

Activity 1

Aim: To demonstrate to trainee teachers that materials development is intrinsic to the language teacher's role

Time: Roughly 30 minutes

Procedure: Teacher trainer reads the below story to the class:

> Simon was on his way to his first teaching posting in a remote village in Papua New Guinea. He had prepared vast amounts of materials (as he wasn't sure what awaited him in the village, Sinofuka), including selected coursebooks, a set of graded readers, newspaper and magazine articles, sets of cartoons and photos, worksheets and glossaries, as well as the basic tools of the trade, coloured chalk and markers, pencils and pens, wads of paper, coloured sheets of cardboard (and scissors) – all packed in a big cardboard box.
>
> The journey was long and complicated. The last leg consisted of a trip in a canoe down a fast-flowing river. You can predict what happened next … Bucked by a particularly high wave, the canoe rocked and the box of materials went over the side into the river. The paddlers, clearly mortified, paddled hither and thither trying to reclaim some of the contents of the box. In the end, Simon was left with half a box of coloured chalk, a couple of sopping sheets of coloured card and two damp pictures, one a bird's eye view of the River Liffey winding through Dublin, the other a Peanuts cartoon of Snoopy hating Mondays.

The teacher trainer gives (or shows) the prompt below (on a slide/board):

'Design a short piece of teaching material using **these!!!**'

Trainee teachers are asked to work in groups of three or four, then team up with another group and share their ideas, or share with the whole class.

Notes:

1. A degree of lateral thinking is possible here – the trainee teachers can use the story as (part of) their designed material.

2. This task was designed for use in Ireland; the actual 'materials' mentioned at the end of the story can be adjusted to suit the context.

To conclude the session, the teacher trainer shows the quote below on a slide/board, suggesting that the trainee teachers' fulfilment of the task has demonstrated this (and opening this for discussion): 'Every teacher is a materials developer.'
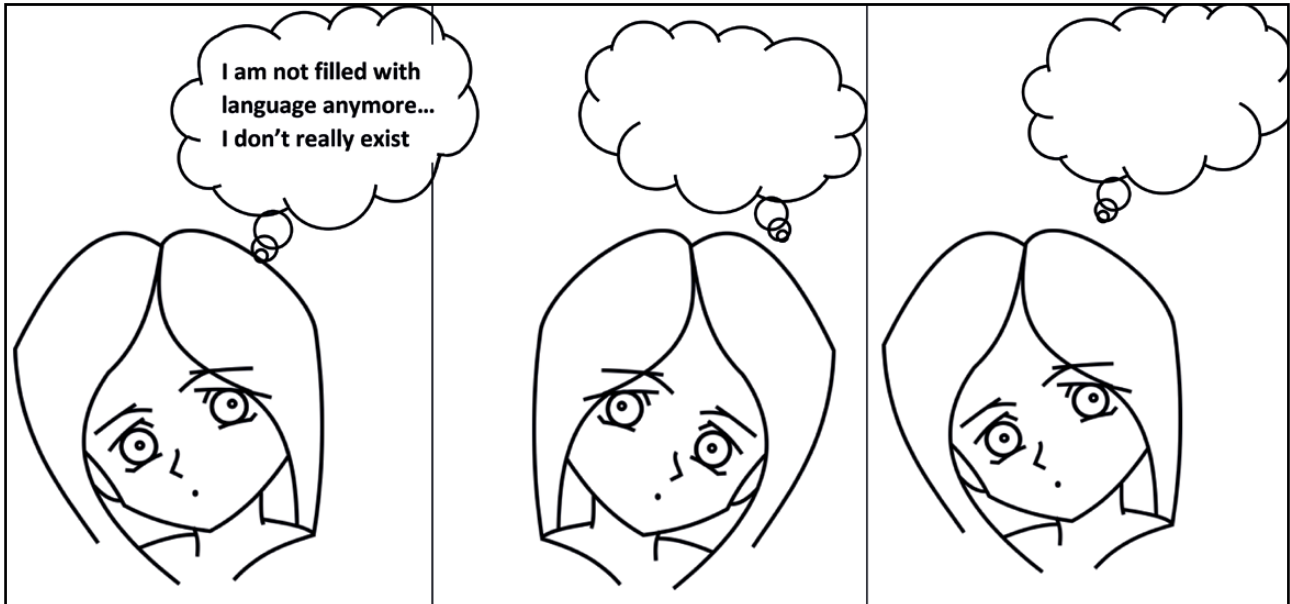
Activity 2:

Aim: To raise awareness and stimulate discussion about how it feels to learn a new language and to fit into a new culture

Time: Roughly 20 minutes

Material: Comic strip: 'Learning a language in a new country'

Learning a language in a new country

© Freda Mishan, 2019

How does learning a new language make YOU feel? Fill in the thought bubbles.

Procedure: The comic strip can be used in a number of ways at the teacher's discretion. Below is one suggestion.

1. Hand out copies of the comic strip and ask the trainees to work individually to complete the speech bubbles.

2. When they have done this, ask trainees to work in pairs or threes to compare their speech bubbles.

3. This should naturally stimulate discussion and increase awareness of their own and their peers' experience of 'language and culture' learning.

4. The teacher can conclude the activity by putting up the comic strip on a slide or a board and inviting trainees to share their speech bubbles (orally), noting these on the slide/board.

5. This should illustrate the variety of language learning experiences in the class and expand the class's awareness of those of others.

Note: The words in the thought bubble 'I am not filled with language anymore … I don't really exist' come from page 89 of the book *Lost in Translation* by Eva Hoffman (1998).

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11

Teacher timeline

Jayakaran Mukundan

1. Develop a timeline for your entire career in teaching so far, indicating the key milestones with pauses (marked with an asterisk (*)). Do this graphically on one piece of paper. On a separate piece of paper elaborate on the pauses (marked with asterisks).

2. Describe an innovation in teaching that has had a huge influence on your life as a teacher.

3. Describe how you contributed to change in classroom teaching after being convinced that conventional ways were counter-productive.

12

Visual thinking strategies

Chrysa Papalazarou

Target group: Teachers of primary students

Learning objective: To explore the visual thinking strategies approach with a photograph. Choose a photograph from the Inherit the Dust series by Nick Brandt: https://inheritthedust.nickbrandt.com/ They are about issues of wildlife loss in East Africa and they are of a highly aesthetic quality.

Tell participants that they will look at and discuss a photograph. During the ensuing discussion it is suggested that they take notes. You will also take notes of their ideas on the board.

Show the photograph. Allow enough time to look at it. Then ask: 'What's going on?' Each time a participant offers an idea, ask a follow-up question: 'What do you see that makes you say that?'

Once these questions have been dealt with ask: 'What more can we find?'

Refrain from making any remarks about participants' ideas or about the visual.

Neither add to participants' input. But paraphrase if needed.

Invite participants to summarise the discussion orally.

Finally, ask participants to reflect on the discussion, consulting their notes and the ones on the board.

Reflection on the activity

Explain that what you have just done is the visual thinking strategies approach. Ask participants to reflect on the questions below.

- What was the trainer's role during the activity?
- What was the participants' role during the activity?
- How do you think this activity could link in with the curriculum or syllabus?
- How do you think it could link to primary student needs?
- Why would you use this activity in a lesson?
- How does it promote learning?
- How can we assess learning during such an activity?
- How does it promote visual literacy?
- How would you get institutional support for trying out this approach?
- What problems do you think you might encounter when trying it with your class?

Participants might also write a blog post or brief article about this activity, including elements such as a description of the activity, the photograph, sharing of ideas that they personally find most interesting, impressions and feelings.

13

Questions for reflection

Phuong thi Anh Le

These reflective questions can be useful to student teachers and teachers in their professional development.

For student teachers

1. In what ways are you a successful/not so successful learner of English?

2. How does this experience help you in being a language teacher?

3. In what ways have your teachers helped you in learning English effectively?

4. Give some examples of how your teachers made their lessons interesting.

5. What do you think you can do to make your students learn English more effectively? Be as specific as possible.

For teachers

1. What books have you found most useful for your teaching? In what ways were they helpful?

2. What are your biggest strengths as an English teacher? How are they reflected in your teaching?

3. Name three major things you have done to improve your teaching. Have they been successful? How? If not, why not?

4. When you have difficulties in your teaching, what do you do to solve the problems?

5. What do you do for your professional development? How successful have you been in these practices? Why?

14

Critical incidents

Shelagh Rixon

1. In my chapter, I identified a critical incident in my career in which I fundamentally disagreed with a policy in an institution where I was a trainee. I described finding a sense of plausibility with my class by a combination of 'empathy and subterfuge'.

    Do you think that my attempt at a solution was a good or moral one? What different strategies or actions would you suggest?

2. Discuss the critical incident concerning how the students heard the word 'teacher' in the writer's received pronunciation accent. This led her to intensify her reading and study in the phonetics of this accent and the problems it might present for listeners.

    Can you identify an incident in which a language mistake or comprehension problem from your students led you to an investigation of your own? What resources (books, mentors, colleagues, internet, etc.) did you draw upon in order to throw more light on the puzzle?

15

To break the rules, you must first master them

Malu Sciamarelli

This simple yet powerful activity is based on Aikido; it is a way of thinking about how we learn a technique and reflect on the best ways of putting it into practice. There are three stages of development:

1. *Shu:* In this beginning stage you follow the teachings of one master precisely. You remain faithful to rules without deviation.

2. *Ha:* At this point you begin to branch out. You can make innovations, which means rules can be broken and/or discarded.

3. *Ri:* Now you are not learning from other people, but from your own experience. You create your own approaches and adapt what you have learned to your own particular circumstances. In this phase, there are no rules, only creativity leading to where you act in accordance with what you judge to be the best.

Suggested way to use this in teaching training or development sessions:

a. Ask each trainee to write examples of each phase above on three different slips of paper.

b. Collect and scramble the papers. Spread them all over the room or stick them on the walls randomly.

c. Draw three columns on the board: *Shu/Ha/Ri*.

d. In groups of three or four teachers, ask them to match the examples to the three phases.

e. Discuss as a whole group if the selections match the phases and the reasoning behind their choices.

f. As a follow-up, you can ask the teachers to write all the examples in a private or public document or blog to use for future reference and practice.

Alternatively, a faster way of doing this activity is to ask teachers to share examples of the three stages in groups and then share their ideas as a whole group. Document the ideas for their future reference and practice.

16

Photos for reflection

Fauzia Shamim

Select ten to 12 pictures from the picture gallery on your mobile to chronicle your major experiences/ milestones as an ELT professional over the last two to five years.

a. Reflect on why these activities/events are important for you/your professional development as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher etc.

b. Select the three most important activities/events. Share these with at least two other colleagues.

c. Following these events/activities, what follow-up action(s) have you taken and/or are you planning to take in the next one to two years to continue with your professional development?

d. What opportunities for CPD are available in your specific teaching-learning context (for example, there may be a language teachers association in your city/country)? How do you plan to take advantage of these opportunities?

e. What are the challenges to your development (both personal and professional)? How do you plan to address these challenges?

17

Thinking about learning

Jane Spiro

Activity 1: Planned and unplanned actions

Choose any typical lesson to reflect on. Divide a page into two columns. In Column A list what you did that was in your lesson plan. In Column B list what you did that was NOT in your lesson plan: any response to learners, change of task or instructions, development of a new task or idea, etc.

Column A Planned actions	Column B Unplanned actions

Looking at the two lists, now ask yourself the questions:

- From which of these actions did I learn something new?
- How might I develop/learn from each activity in each list?

Activity 2: Beyond language

Choose another lesson to reflect on. Divide the page into two. In Column A consider what language was being taught or learned. In Column B, list what else apart from language was being revealed, expressed or practised.

Column A Language learned/practised	Column B Beyond language: what else?

How important are the areas of learning listed in Column B? How might you develop them further?

Activity 3: Finding flow

Write a list in Column A of activities outside your professional life and, returning to childhood, of times where you were fully absorbed and engaged.

In Column B think about how you might harness this activity in your language classroom.

Column A Activities where I was fully engaged	Column B Adaptation to the language lesson

18

Two CPD activities to make visible the class atmosphere you create

Adrian Underhill

The quality of your listening to your students

This is best done with other teachers in a professional development session.

1. In pairs, the speaker talks about something easy but real – for example, 'What went well in my last lesson?'. The listener pays attention to the speaker, while also trying to notice *how* they (the listener) are listening. So they pay attention to the inner movements of their own listening, to see what else they are doing with their attention apart from listening (e.g. planning what to say next, judging the speaker or what they have said, or planning a shopping list.)

2. After a couple of minutes the speaker stops, and now the listener talks about what they noticed in their own listening, in terms of attention to or distraction from the speaker, and how their own internal thoughts and feelings may have been 'stealing' their attention. Keep it light. It can be quite humorous.

3. The aim is to move elegantly around 'inside one's listening' and to see what one is doing *apart from listening to the other*. Once one sees this, one can resolve to listen more attentively, and to see how this impacts on the psychological atmosphere of the class.

4. We cannot *pretend* to listen well. If I am distracted, it shows, and it affects the students who are speaking, and the quality of attention of the rest of the class. If I can listen well, something in the entire class may gradually be transformed.

What your body language is saying to your learners

This is best done as a mini-professional development project with one or two teacher colleagues.

1. Self-video all or part of a lesson.

2. Watch the video and select a piece no more than two or three minutes long where you are mostly the focus, perhaps interacting with students.

3. View your selected clip with your teacher colleagues. Tell them why you have chosen this section, and ask them to comment on what they see. Field these comments without need to defend or justify anything.

4. View the clip a second time, while you give a commentary, speaking aloud, about what you were thinking to yourself at each moment in the video. Allow humour, be playful.

5. View again but watch your body language, and this time *speak aloud* the 'voice of your body', as if your body is telling us what its movements are saying. So your body speaks through you in the first person, e.g. 'My smile is saying I want you to agree, and that I'm slightly anxious, my hand movement is my uncertainty … That look on my face is saying …'

6. At this point, or in the next professional development session, one of your teacher colleagues will offer something similar.

The purpose of this is to see how our body language primes the class with certain attitudes, apprehensions and psychological qualities. We cannot hide anything. Our bodies keep no secrets. Learning to see this in ourselves opens up a new order of opportunity to develop our 'classroom self' and our personal performance art.

19

Teach reflection: two ideas

Tessa Woodward

Idea 1: 'Talking shop'

Teachers rarely get the chance to talk about their work in their own way even in professional development sessions. So, one idea is to invite a group of teachers (20 maximum) with a few years' experience to a 'talking shop' session. Decide on a topic such as 'my funniest teaching moment' or 'my most embarrassing teaching moment'. Participants are to prepare a true anecdote from their experience on the topic and bring it with them in note form. They should be prepared to tell that anecdote to the group. If possible, allow for some food, drink and music to greet people.

When everyone is seated in a circle after initial chit-chat, explain the idea. Volunteers, in any order, tell an anecdote. While a teacher is telling their anecdote, all listen attentively. Clarification questions are allowed, but there should be no praise or blame or interruptions. Hoots of laughter are OK unless the tale is a sad one. Expressions of sympathy are also fine. If necessary, if you are the host, prime the pump with an anecdote of your own. (For full background on this idea, see Clark (2001). For more ideas on how to put it into practice, see Woodward, Graves and Freeman (2018)).

Idea 2: Critical incident analysis

This idea involves remembering teaching moments, writing descriptions and analysing using a set of extremely useful questions taken from Tripp (2011) and Woodward, Graves and Freeman (2018).

Think back over a week, a term, a year of teaching or longer and identify one or two incidents that you wish you had handled differently and that you feel had an impact on your practice in some way.

Then choose one incident and write about it in the following sequence:

- Describe and explain using questions: *When and where did it happen? Who was involved? What was the sequence of events? Who said what? Who did what?*

- Provide rich, concrete facts: *Feelings during and after the incident? What emotions were evoked? Explain the event from the point of view of each participant. What precipitated the incident? Why did it happen? How did it feel?*

- Analyse the general meaning and significance: *What does the incident tell you about teaching and learning? Can you relate it to theories that are important to you?*

- State your position: *What does the incident tell you about what you believe as an educator?*

- Describe the effects on your practice: *What effect did the incident have on you and your practice? Did it change what you do? What you believe? How?*

(Taken from Woodward, Graves and Freeman (2018).)

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20

Possible implications for teacher training and continuing professional development

Andrew Wright

In these notes I assert general truths, but I fully acknowledge they are related to my own experiences and conceptual development. Furthermore, I, too, am a child of my times and culture. So what might be true for me may simply not be true for someone else in another culture or even someone living next door to me!

The suggestions I offer below, if perceived positively, must be holistically developed within the teacher. They are a way of life – not mere techniques; painting by numbers does not produce living paintings!

1. The relationship between teacher and learner

The personal relationship between teacher and student is central. Is the teacher a teller, explainer, trainer and tester? Or is the teacher an event maker, an animator, an excited anticipator, a shrewd and constructive supplier of feedback? A combination?

Central to this understanding is for teachers to be helped to understand themselves and why it is that they have become language teachers. It can be that some key feature in a teacher's sense of identity is their own importance as a master of the target language. (For example, the teacher who told me he represented 2,000 years of learning!) How compatible is this with the teacher's central purpose, which is to help each learner to develop richly for their own sake and for the society in which they are living? (That sentiment reveals my value system!)

Possible task to set in teacher development

In private time each student teacher should make notes on which people in their lives really affected them positively and helped them to develop in some way. Describe the situations in which this happened and the various emotional aspects. Discuss in pairs and then in class.

Analyse just what you think is a teacher's role and a teacher's relationship with the students. In groups and then in class see if you can generalise commonly held perceptions and opinions.

2. The teacher as event maker

Can the teacher (together with the students) create activities which really engage the students as people and allow them to take part as students of English?

Possible task to set in teacher development

Student teachers in pairs or groups brainstorm activities in which their students (of an agreed age) might choose to take part in their free time. Having brainstormed some examples, list the language that would have to be understood and the language that would have to be used in order to take part. Discuss if these could be done in the classroom and with which language level of students.

3. The teacher as a poly-channel communicator

The teacher inevitably uses well or badly a small orchestra of communicative instruments from the moment they enter the classroom: body communication, clothes, vocal expression, proximity, classroom arrangement and visual appearance, pictures, realia, symbols, organisational charts and other graphics and, of course, digital things.

Any of these other communicative instruments can be more powerful in their relevant effect than any words she uses. The voice can support the meaning she intends in her choice of words or can contradict the meaning of the words and this vocal meaning is the one the student imbibes. Try saying 'hello' in different ways and observe the different meanings conveyed varying from the positive to the extremely negative. In the dictionary there is one definition.

Given the power of these other communicative instruments which are ubiquitous in our daily world, surely the training of language teachers should include not mere knowledge about their importance but some ability and skill in using them appropriately? As a storyteller in literally hundreds of schools in 50 countries I have learned that even the way I walk into a classroom has an effect, positive or negative, on the students before I have even begun to tell my first story.

And, centrally, does the teacher delight in how language can live and entrance as well as create and stir images in the imagination, and can the teacher share this delight?

Possible task to set in teacher development

In pairs play with the variety of ways in which everyday phrases can be spoken. Analyse and discuss what might be meant if the words are spoken like that.

Possible task to set in teacher development

Explore the sound of words in poetry, children's playground rhymes and texts in advertising. Collect and exhibit or act out examples.

Possible task to set in teacher development

List ten phrases commonly used in the classroom and find ways of making them 'pleasing to the ear' and memorable, e.g. through alliteration, rhythm and stress, modification of word order, or chime and rhyme.

4. The teacher as explainer, trainer and tester

These more traditional skills remain, in my opinion, extremely important. To believe passionately in the need for students to experience the language in activities which matter to them does not mean that there is no role for a focus on language points and for a study of them. If footballers can play in real matches every week, they are only too ready to see the relevance of match analysis and training to develop their fitness and their ball skills.

Possible task to set in teacher development

Collect all those activities we choose to do that focus on a limited range of grammatical and lexical structures, e.g. learning and playing magic tricks or poems based on the repetition of particular sentences.

Highly relevant to all four of these suggestions are Davis and Rinvolucri (1988); Maley (2000); Maley and Duff (2005); Maley and Peachey (2015); Morgan and Rinvolucri (1983); Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (1979); Wright (1995, 1997, 2015); and Wright and Hill (2008).

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