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Building a Bridge Between Student-Centered Teachers and Teacher-Centered Students

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MATESOL, SIT Graduate Institute

Independent Professional Project

Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the challenges and successes faced while implementing student-centered (SC) practices, such as learner reflection, rubric and syllabus co-creation, self-and peer-editing process, and developing inner criteria for correctness, with a student population that is accustomed to teacher-centered (TC) education. These practices will be integrated in the classroom using a theoretical basis founded in experiential learning, discovery-based learning, project-based learning, and the Silent-Way. The student population examined in this paper are female Saudi students studying in the Interlink University Preparation Program within al-Yamamah University (YU). YU is an English- medium university. All Interlink students have been accepted into YU, but don't yet have the English level necessary to complete academic courses.

Introduction

Student-centered learning is a style of instruction where student experience and knowledge is the focus. Under this model, teachers are viewed as facilitators who are there to provide structure and guidance to students along their learning journey. While using student-centered teaching methods is ideal, it can become problematic when the students are accustomed to, and may even prefer, teacher-centered teaching.

Teaching context

This independent professional project was conducted within the Interlink program at al-Yamamah University (YU). YU is an English-medium- university. Therefore, students who are accepted but unable to test at or above a B2 English level are placed into the Interlink program and required to complete it prior to taking academic courses. Students are typically aged 18-21,

although there are occasionally older students. While YU is one of the few universities to combine male and female students into one building, classes are still gender segregated. Therefore, the students this IPP describes are all female.

The classes I will be teaching are Orientation 2R and 1C. The R classes are “reading and writing” while the C classes are “communication- Listening and Speaking”. Level one in the Interlink program is associated with a high A1-Low A2 on the CEFR scale, while level two is associated with a mid-high A2. The curriculum is project based and each class has an individual core project (ICP), a group core project (GCP), and independent reading/listening project (IRP/ILP). In all R classes, the ICP is a journal assignment. The students are required to write 14-16 journals a week. The length depends on the level and the topics of the journals really depend on the teacher. The GCP in the R class is called a “group project” in name, but the only collaborative parts of the writing process are the brainstorming and the peer review. Outside of this, the students write an academic essay individually. For level 2R, it’s a cause-and-effect essay. In the C class, both projects are structured around a speaking presentation. In the ICP, the students research, plan, and conduct the presentation alone; and, in the GCP they do it in groups. The topic of the projects depends on the level. For 1C, the topic of the ICP is “tour guide” and the GCP is “international culture”

The Interlink program is based on their INSPIRED model: Interactive, Needs-based, Student-centered, Project-based, Inner-criteria based, Reflective, Experiential, Discovery-based (INTERLINK Language Centers, 2024). This model is in sharp contrast to what the students experience in the K-12 setting. Saudi public schools are notoriously teacher-centered, and, by extension, grade-centered (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The focus is often on students achieving high marks, not on learning, as high marks reflect well on the teachers. Plagiarism is rampant and

there are many businesses in Riyadh which cater to completing academic assignments for students such as essays, PowerPoints, dioramas, poster boards, etc. Students are rarely questioned when they plagiarize. Furthermore, public schools follow the banking model of education (Freire, 1970, p. 70). Students view the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and are accustomed to looking to the teacher for assurance that they are doing something correctly/well.

There is often a level of frustration experienced by students when they begin the Interlink program. They are usually surprised when they plagiarize an assignment and are not only called out for it, but given a 0 or a major grade reduction. Additionally, the students may feel like a teacher is not doing her job whenever she guides a student to discover the language for themselves rather than giving information directly. According to the program director, every term, there are students who complain to him about teachers who “don’t answer their questions” or “ don’t help them with their assignments”. He reports that the students usually show disbelief and/or annoyance whenever he tells them that this style of teaching is in line with the Interlink model and is what should be happening in the classroom.

I think it is also important for the purposes of this IPP to mention context in the sense of my relationship to teaching as a profession. I have very firm work-life boundaries. This is true for any job I have ever worked, but they become especially rigid when I am working for a for-profit entity, such as YU. It is an unfortunate reality of teaching that the workload we are given almost always surpasses the 40 hours in which we are paid to work. It is often taken for granted the idea that teachers will make up for this by working for free, in their own time.

I resent the idea that I am made to choose between claiming my time outside of work as my own, or letting the quality of my classes slip. While many teachers feel an obligation to keep

class quality high and, as a result, choose to perform free labor, it is my belief that it is the administration's job to maintain conditions in which I can perform my job effectively within the hours that I am paid. Therefore, during particular points during the term when time is incredibly tight (week 3 due to GCP 1/ICP, week 4 due to midterm reports due in Week 7 due to GCP 2/GCP, and week 8 due to final reports due), many of my time consuming "best practices", including some of the practices I am implementing in this IPP, fall to the wayside. I will expand more on the specific ways these time crunches have affected my IPP in the implementation section.

Practices to be Implemented

While there is an abundance of research discussing the variety of ways a classroom can become more student-centered, for the purposes of this IPP, I chose five main areas to focus on. I discuss these areas in this paper as if they are separate entities, they are much more intertwined and harder to separate in practice.

The reason behind choosing these specific areas is two-fold. Firstly, they are practices which teachers, theoretically, should already be implementing in the Interlink classroom. Inner-criteria for success and reflection are directly stated in the INSPIRED model. Syllabus co-creation can be seen as a natural by-product of the "needs-based" part of the model. Moreover, while Interlink has a "broad" curriculum which lays out benchmarks and projects for each level, there is no textbook or other form of "narrow" curriculum which guides the classes day by day or even week by week. It is up to the teacher to develop this based on student need and interest. Therefore, it is heavily encouraged by the administration that teachers take students' input into consideration when planning syllabus. Similarly, peer-editing and rubric co-creation are

considered by the program to be key student-centered practices that teachers should be using in the classroom.

Secondly, I chose these specific practices because I recognized them as important classroom practices, but felt like both my theoretical and practical knowledge of them was insufficient. This IPP felt like the perfect opportunity to dive into the research and to be consistent with post-teaching journaling and reflections.

Syllabus co-creation

A co-created syllabus is one of the potential by-products of a collaborative classroom. Not every collaborative classroom has a co-created syllabus, but co-created syllabi are usually only found in collaborative learning environments. That being said, the reason for, and the degree to which, co-creation occurs in a classroom can vary widely.

Ordem (2023) introduced it to their university level ESL students in an effort to shift socio-political power from the “elites” into the hands of the students. Hudd (2003) noted the desire to shift student roles from knowledge consumer to knowledge co-creator, as well as a desire to enhance student empowerment, motivation, and problem-solving skills. Similarly, Gibson (2011), wanted to engage students in the learning process as a way to enhance learning and make classes more interesting for students.

Collaboration varied from topic selection (Ordem, 2023; Sharkey, 1990), assignment/assessment selection, along with assignments’ weights and due dates (Hudd, 2003), objectives, topics, assignments/assessments, assignments’ weights and due dates (Gibson, 2011). I made the decision to collaborate with my students in two main areas. First is the topic selection for the syllabus. They will choose weekly themes, but I will be the one to decide on the majority

of assignments, objectives, due dates, etc. Second is the independent listening/reading projects. Students decided on the types of materials they wanted to read/listen to, while I created the assignments and chose the due dates.

There are several reasons why I chose to keep syllabus co-creation limited in scope. First is the students' low proficiency levels combined with their inexperience with collaboration of this kind. At the time of the IPP, I did not feel like I had figured out an effective way to communicate the goal or purpose of more extensive collaboration to the students. I believed that attempting it would have led to a lot of misunderstanding and frustration on both ends. The second reason is the students' lack of ability to describe their learning goals beyond "improve my writing/speaking/speaking" or "learn new vocabulary skills. Given my experience in the previous terms, students seemed that they would need a lot of scaffolding before they could identify more specific skills that they may want to focus on. There simply wasn't enough time at the beginning of the term to provide this for them. Finally, the general attitude of students regarding motivation for learning English was disinterested or apathetic. This lack of motivation by the students means, again, that without significant scaffolding, it's likely that more extensive collaboration would not have been successful.

Rubric co-creation

The process of rubric co-creation can be beneficial to students in four fundamental ways. First, it brings student awareness to what a rubric is and how it works (Skillings & Ferrell, 2000). Secondly, when students participate in the creation of the rubric, they are much more aware of what is expected from them when completing an assignment (Andrade & Du, 2005; Ghaffer, 2020; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). Not only that, but in the process of rubric creation, the students are exposed to quality work and are given the opportunity to dissect and analyze what it

is that makes the work high quality. (Skillings & Ferrell, 2000). Thirdly, students who participate in rubric co-creation tend to produce higher quality work compared to peers who did not (Becker, 2016; Andrade, 2000). Finally, participating in the co-creation process can increase student feelings of autonomy and motivation (Ghaffer, 2020).

While developing rubrics with the student, I will be following the six steps outlined in Heidi Andrade's (2000) article, "Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning". These steps include: 1. Look at models, 2. List criteria, 3. Pack and unpack the criteria, 4. Articulate level of quality, 5. Create a draft, and 6. Revise the draft. I will go into more detail about how I implemented these steps in the "Outcomes" section of this paper.

Self-and Peer-Editing

Peer editing is a practice that is considered an important part of the writing process both when writing in a foreign language and in one's native language. It exposes students to more examples of writing, both good and not so good. This exposure allows them to learn the dos and don'ts of writing, helping them to identify mistakes in their own work, as well as include new elements that they see in the works of others (Abdul Malik et al., 2019).

Getting students to recognize this and actively participate in peer editing can be a struggle because students, especially language students, tend to believe that only the teacher can provide effective feedback on their writing (Hamouda, 2011). According to Abdul Malik, et al (2019), this is because students feel that the teacher is more of an expert than their peers, and because they feel like the teacher tends to give more detailed and useful feedback. However, there is an abundance of research supporting the idea that peer feedback can be very effective when students are trained on how to do so (al-Jamal, 2009; Berg, 1999; Harmer, 2004; Stanley, 1992).

My intent for improving the editing process in my class was threefold. First, I introduced a self-editing worksheet. My hope was to draw student attention to aspects of writing that they should already be familiar with, such as subject-verb agreement, and fix those mistakes on their own. Secondly, I wanted to try a new and improved peer-editing form, one that is more student-friendly and included more aspects of writing for students to review. I made the worksheet double sided, with one side focusing on mechanics and the other on content. The idea was to have each essay reviewed by at least two students. Finally, I planned to conduct a peer-review workshop with my students. While there was plenty of research supporting the use of these workshops, not many of them went into detail as to how the workshops were conducted, so it was up to me to plan it out myself. I go more into detail as to how I did this in the outcomes section

Development of inner criteria for Success

The concept of inner-criteria for success originally comes from Gattengo (1972). He discusses the importance of students “learning how to learn” by developing their own inner criteria which guides self-monitoring and self-correction, rather than relying on an outside source (the teacher). Gattengo mentioned that he would “..not correct learners; I only throw them back onto themselves to elaborate further their criteria”(Gattengo, 1972, p. 31).

However, outside of Gattengo’s seminal work describing what inner criteria is and why developing it is important, I found very little literature that explored or explained 1. Steps teachers could take to develop inner criteria of success, or 2. How to measure/tell if inner criteria was being developed in students. I had to take it upon myself to develop some practices.

My plan was very simple. First, I wanted to explicitly explain the concept of discovery-based learning with my students. I felt like doing this would help them understand some of the methods I use in class and reduce the frustration they feel when I don't provide them with direct answers. Secondly, I wanted to set an expectation with my students about what types of questions I would and would not answer. I go more in-depth into these in the outcomes sections of this paper.

Reflection

Reflection, a foundational part of the experiential learning cycle, has been argued to be the missing link that connects experience with learning (Kolb, 1984; Knutson, 2003). Proponents of reflection in the classroom push against the idea that simply participating in classroom activities, whether they be task-based, project-based, discovery-based, etc, is enough for students to truly learn and integrate new knowledge. In my teaching practice, I have accepted the idea that reflection is an integral part of learning, but I have not yet figured out the most effective way to go about it.

Reflection needs to be skillful in order to be helpful (Knutson, 2003). While end-of-activity reflections are generally what comes to mind when one thinks of reflection, they can take place at various points of an activity or project. That being said, I mostly focused on formal, end-of-activity or end-of-week reflections for this IPP. I wanted to narrow in on the internalization phase of Koenderman's (2000) proposed 4-phase experiential model. This phase usually contains a debriefing activity where students can reflect on what they learned, how they learned it, and how it applies to future activities.

I developed a weekly reflection form that I planned to implement and update as needed based on student (non) response. These forms were meant to give students an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned that week, what they need to study more and what types of activities were and weren't helpful for them and so. This information would also be very helpful for me throughout the course. I also developed several post-activity reflections that were meant to help students reflect on what they learned, and how, during a particular activity and how they can use that knowledge going forward.

When researching reflection in TESOL specifically, the majority of the findings are discussing teachers' reflections on their own practice, rather than student reflections on their learning. Furthermore, the articles that focus on student reflections tend to discuss how they contribute to learning, not on how teachers can effectively include them in the classroom or guide students through them. This gap in research is also noted by Huang (2021) and Farrell (2017).

While there are many different models of reflections, I found that Gibb's (1988) appeared the most helpful for my endeavor of figuring out exactly what questions I should include on my post-activity and end of week reflections. His six-stage model includes: 1. Descriptions: What happened? 2. Feelings: What were you thinking or feeling? 3. Evaluation: What was good and bad about the situation? 4. Action Plan: If it arose again, what would you do? 5. Conclusion: What else could you have done? 6. Description: What sense can you make of the situation? It should be noted that this model is grounded in Dewey's seminal work on reflection (1989).

With this model as a guide, it is up to me to frame reflections in a way that is meaningful and relevant to my students, as well as create an environment in which they feel comfortable answering these questions honestly.

Outcomes

Syllabus co-creation:

The first week of classes feels like the most critical when it comes to setting the tone and expectations of a student-centered classroom. There is a lot of teacher-student collaboration that needs to be done almost immediately so that I can begin planning more of that term's curriculum. Given that my students' levels are low, I felt like the most appropriate way to collaborate with them, at least initially, was with topic selection. The project theme for R class is Cause and Effect essay, so we have a fairly wide range when it comes to what topics we want to discuss. For the C students, their project themes are "tour guide" and "international culture", so they were slightly more limited in the scope of topics they could choose that would be both relevant to the project themes and effective in scaffolding them in the process of the project.

For both classes, I started by explaining to the students that each week would have a topic and that the reading/listening activities we do during those weeks would be related to the topic, as well as most of the vocabulary that we learn. Because collaborative learning is new to them, I also explained my reasoning behind eliciting their opinions. I then presented the topics that I had come up with beforehand and invited the class to brainstorm additional ideas.

In the R class, I got several ideas from various students in the class. I had presented the themes "travel, environment, relationships (family, friends, and romantic), diet culture and body image, and social media trends". The students added "sports, culture, festivals, skin care,

movies/tv shows/art”. After brainstorming, I gave the students a piece of paper and asked them to write down the 4 topics they like the most. In the end, they selected travel, relationships, sports, and movie/TV shows/art. Two topics from my original list, and Two topics from their collective ideas.

In the C class, I gave the same explanation about what we were doing and the process as I gave to the R class. However, when it came time to brainstorm topics, there was initially no response given from the students. After a bit of prodding from me, one student started to throw out several suggestions, with no input from the others. In the end we had about 13 different topics and the final selections were “Food and Dining Customs, Clothing and Fashion, Music, Art and Dancing, Movies and TV shows, and Sports”. Three topics from my original list and two from their “collective” ideas.

We also focused on independent project (IRP/ILP) collaboration in week one. There is an on-going issue with Interlink students simply not turning in their IRP/ILP assignments. I have gathered from student observation and conversation that this is because the students simply don’t want to, they forget, or they feel like it’s not worth their time as the IRP/ILP assignments only contribute 5% to their final grade.

It’s a bit of a catch-22 as the independent project is supposed to be something that the students take responsibility for in their own time (hence the name INDEPENDENT project). However, many teachers, knowing that students usually don’t read or complete these assignments, will opt to do assignments in class rather than having students do them at home. When talking with some of these teachers, they report that they feel like it motivates the students. Moreover, they feel like it’s their duty to remind the students to read as the IRP assignments are often given on Sunday and due the following Tuesday.

While I believe that teachers should do their best to make activities fun and relevant for the students, I also feel like students have to learn to take responsibility for their schoolwork. They also need to develop a system for keeping track of what assignments they have, when they are due, and how to allocate their time appropriately. If they choose to not do and get a poor grade on the assignments, then that is on them.

That being said, I wondered this term if there was something I could do to make the IRP/ILP more engaging for the students. I explained to them what the project was and that there were many different things we could possibly read/listen to in order to meet the project requirements. In the R class, we brainstormed options, such as a regular novel that we read sections of each week, short stories and we read a completely new one each week, or news articles. The students voted and chose short stories. I then asked the students which genres they were interested in, and put together a selection of 5 different short stories within those genres. The students participated in a poll in LMS to choose our first book. The process was similar with the C class, except they opted to do a different type of listening every week.

Unfortunately, I did not notice an increase in assignment completion compared to previous terms. In the future, I think it would be beneficial to give students choice beyond the reading/listening material and have them decide on the assignments for this project as well. I might try out Hudd's (2003) example of asking the students to decide amongst themselves what they want the assignment to be. If that does not work out well, then I would try Gibson's (2011) tactic of giving the students a list of different possible assignments to choose from.

Rubric Co-creation

One of the things I was most excited about trying this term was rubric co-creation. This was not something I attempted at all during our first term. In the second term, I gave it a try, but it didn't feel very effective. I had simply made a rubric, passed it out to the students and asked them to give me their feedback. It turned into a negotiation where they wanted every single criterion to be lowered. In fact, one of the students made a comment that it felt like they were at a market, negotiating prices with a seller. I agreed, and had not left that class period feeling good about the process.

This term, rubric co-creation felt much more effective. In the R class, we created two separate rubrics- one for their journals (the ICP) and one for their GCPs. For the journals, I passed out the "Journal reflection sheet" (see appendix A). The students selected how many journals they wanted to do a week, as well as what they wanted their journals to be graded on. I explained to them that I wanted them to think about what aspects of their writing need the most work, and therefore would benefit the most from my feedback. The students ended up selecting 3 journals a week, and that they wanted to be graded on grammar, handwriting, and spelling. I did not feel like handwriting would have been an effective aspect of their writing for me to give feedback on, so I changed it to content. I explained my reasoning to the students and no one pushed back.

This is one of the situations where I question if what I did was Student-Centered. On one hand, as the teacher-facilitator, I gave students the autonomy to choose what is most important for them to get feedback on in order to improve their writing skills. They know their writing best and what areas they struggle in the most. On the other hand, as the teacher-expert, I knew that grading students based on their handwriting was not something that would benefit them, especially given that there was only one student whose writing was so bad that I struggled to read it. Additionally, I don't know enough about teaching basic literacy to give students effective

feedback for how to improve their handwriting. It's not a category that would allow for the feedback-improvement process to work. If that was a part of the rubric, then it would have just resulted in the students who already had nice handwriting always getting a 5, while those who weren't good yet perpetually getting 3s or 1s. Finally, improving their handwriting is not really that important for their future written English. Interlink is a program that is stuck on using paper documents due to the pervasive plagiarism issue with the students. Once they get into their academic courses, and eventually into the workforce, almost everything they write will be done so electronically. Going forward, I think I will take handwriting off of the journal rubric document.

When it came time to create the R class GCP rubric, and the C class ICP rubric, the students were much more involved. I followed Andrade's (2000) 6 steps. The first step is to look at models. In the R class, we used two essays from the previous term. I cut each essay into chunks of 1-2 sentences and had the students try to arrange them in order. We did one essay at a time. The first essay was one that received a 6.5/10 grade and the other had received a 9.5/10. This method seemed more effective compared to the last term when I just handed the groups two essays to read and compare. When I did that, I noticed that the student pairs had one person read each essay rather than both of them reading both essays. Additionally, the students did not read them as thoroughly as they needed to when putting the sentences in order. These two factors resulted in a less effective comparison, as well as less attention paid to what went into a "good" essay or what was missing from a "bad" one.

Anyhow, I gave the students the 6.5 essay first. I asked the students if they thought it was a good essay and the majority of them said "no". I elicited some reasons why- some repetition in the ideas, spelling, no transition words, etc. I then passed out the 9.5 and we did the same thing.

We then moved on to step 2, list the criteria. I asked the students to look at the two essays and work in their groups to come up with a list of what makes a good and bad essay. I reminded them to consider both the content of the essay and the mechanics. After they had time to discuss in their groups, we came together as a class and shared. I was very impressed with the list the students came up with as it was much more extensive and specific compared to the last time I attempted this. I wrote their ideas on a Google doc and we moved on to step 3, pack and unpack the criteria.

Once everything was listed in the doc , I told the students that we needed to come up with five or six categories for the rubric. They initially came up with “content, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and organization”. With some discussion, we combined spelling with other criteria, such as punctuation and sentence fragments, and turned the category into “mechanics”. I added the category of task achievement as they would specifically be writing cause and effect essays.

We didn't have enough time to finish, so we paused at that point for the day. The next class, I brought rubrics that were all blank except the categories we had discussed. We started the class by looking at the criteria we had outlined on the Google doc and sorting them into the categories they belonged to. For example, transition words and topic/conclusion sentences to “organization”, and so on. After we finished this, we moved on to step 4, articulate levels of quality. I passed out the blank rubrics and asked the students to work in groups and consider the criteria we outlined for each category and decide what they would need to do to get a 5/5, 3/5, and 1/5 in each category. I explained to the students that once they've completed this, I would take each group's rubric and I would consider what they wrote for each category and try to create a final rubric that considered everyone's opinion, along with my own. I reminded the students

that a 5/5 should be achievable, but not easy. They should have to try hard to get it, and if I felt that the groups were making the criteria too easy, I would raise it when making the final.

I very quickly realized that the students would need more guidance before they could do articulate levels of quality on their own. I brought the class back together and we did one category, content, together. I tried my best to guide students to logical levels of quality.

Teacher: "How many sentences are in a paragraph?"

Students: "5-6"

Teacher: "Ok, and the first sentence is what?"

Students "The topic sentence"

Teacher: "and last sentence is....?"

Students: "The conclusion"

Teacher: "Ok, so how many detail sentences should there be?"

Students: "3-4"

Teacher: "Ok, so many detail sentences should there be in order to get a 5/5?"

Students: "3-4"

And so on.

After doing content together, I sent the students back into their groups to finish the rest of the rubric on their own. I walked around answering questions and providing guidance as needed. We had other things to finish that day, so I set a timer for 20 minutes and collected the

rubrics after that. Only about 2 of the 7 groups had completely finished filling the rubric in. About 3/7 had completed half or more, and the other two had written almost nothing.

After class that day, I completed step 5, creating a draft rubric, by examining what the students wrote, while considering my opinion as the teacher and the benchmarks of the course. I presented the drafts to the students the next day and asked if there was anything they disagreed with. They all said they thought it was fine, so we skipped step six, which is to revise the draft.

The process with my C class students was very similar with two exceptions: We did it all in one class period, and we articulated levels of quality differently. Rather than having them work in groups and fill in a blank rubric, I had them discuss in groups and then we came together as a class to discuss and make the final decisions. We went category by category. I gave them five or so minutes to discuss in groups before coming together. The students were engaged for the first two or so categories, but after that, it was clear that they were losing interest. By the fourth category, there were only a few students, maybe 2 or 3, engaging with me during the “whole class” discussion. Most of the other students were playing on their phones or just listening without contributing. I reminded the students a few times that this process would affect how their projects are graded and now was their chance to have a say in things, but they still did not engage much.

It outwardly felt like a failure compared to the R students. However, I wonder if it really was. Only 2 out of the 7 groups in the R class completed the blank rubrics. And within those groups, it's probable that only 1 or 2 of the students were really contributing. It's possible that the R class rubric is just as much a product of only a few contributing students as the C class, but it just wasn't as obvious.

My overall feeling after completing the rubric co-creation process with my students was positive. It is possible that I mostly felt that way because it went so much better than the last time I attempted it. However, I felt that I still didn't get as much input as I would have liked due most groups not completely filling in levels of quality for each category. There are some things I would, theoretically, do differently next time. First, I would give students more time in the articulate levels of quality stage. Maybe 30 minutes instead of 20. Secondly, I would follow the advice of Ghaffer (2020) and Andrade (2000) who discuss making and using a rubric over a topic more familiar to the students prior to creating the rubric for the assignment. For example, Ghaffer talked about making a rubric for what makes a delicious brownie, then having students taste and rate brownies accordingly. I could do something similar with students regarding a food or make up item. Thirdly, I would have done the C class in the same fashion as the R class, with students working in groups to write in blank rubrics, rather than having whole class discussions. Finally, I would have guided the class through articulating levels of quality for two categories rather than just one. The one we did together, content, was very numbers-based: 3-4 detailed sentences, 2-3 examples, etc., which carried over well to other parts of the rubric. However, other categories were better articulated using indefinite quantifiers. It would have been helpful to go through some examples with those as a class.

Self and Peer editing

The self-editing worksheet that I introduced to my writing class is not something that I would consider to be "amazing" or "transformational". It is a simple checklist with common mistakes I have noticed among students at this level (see Appendix B). I update and change the checklist based on where we are in the term and which writing workshops we have completed.

For my 2R class, it typically asks them to look for subject-verb agreement mistakes, sentences starting with “but”, “and”, “like” or “such as”, capital letters, missing periods, and verbs not written in the correct tense. None of these mechanics are new to the learners and almost all of the students know basic rules of how to use them. However, when I encourage students to review their papers for mistakes, they often either 1. Don’t do it and simply say they do, or 2. Do it but make few to no changes. I know this because all our written assignments are completed with pencil and paper, so there is evidence when students go back and change their writing.

About a week after doing the rubric co-creation, I ran a peer review workshop in my R class. I was not sure how to go about this. Although there is a ton of research supporting the fact that teaching students how to do peer review makes it more effective, almost none of the articles I read actually discussed how to do a peer review workshop or the specifics of what their workshops entailed. Also, some of the articles spent significantly more time on the workshops than was available to me. One mentioned four hours of class time! While I am typically free to spend my class time as I see fit, it didn’t seem feasible for me to spend two entire class periods on peer review when there was so much other material we needed to cover prior to the students writing their first GCP.

The first thing I did was re-develop my peer review (PR) worksheet (see Appendix C). In some discussions I had with my instructional coordinator, as well as some other teachers, I realized that formatting the worksheet as a checklist is more user-friendly for the students. I also made it significantly longer, with one page focused on mechanics and the other focused on content. I did this for two reasons. First, my students tend to only consider the mechanics when thinking about their writing and the writing of their peers. The idea of content is secondary, if a

consideration at all. Secondly, my plan was to put students into groups of 3 and have each paper reviewed by two students. One would complete the mechanics side of the worksheet and the other would complete the content. This turned out to be complicated and confusing, but I will expand on that later.

For the peer review workshop, what I planned and what really happened were quite different. I used another essay from a previous class, which I had graded at 7/10, and gave it to the students, along with the peer review worksheet. I had intended to have the students read the essay and fill out both sides of the peer review worksheet. I then wanted them to use the rubric we created to analyze the essay and give it a grade. However, the activity we did prior to the workshop went very long and students didn't have time to complete even one side of the PR worksheet. This was a Thursday, so I didn't see the students again until Sunday, which is when we finished reviewing the essay, but only with the "content" side. We then, quickly, reviewed the essay as a class and discussed what feedback they left for the author. As expected, students missed some major content errors and I tried to elicit them, "do we see any repeating ideas?", "Look at this example. Is it a good example? Why or why not?". This was successful on a few points, and others I had to explicitly tell the students they were problematic and why.

During the peer revision cycle of the first GCP, the results were encouraging, but not too impressive. I collected 32 completed peer review worksheets from students. Out of these, there were 21 papers in which the reviewer indicated an area where the author could improve. The other 11 indicated that there were no areas of improvement for the author. Further investigation is needed to determine why this was. Out of the 21 worksheets indicating an area of improvement, 8 of them only indicated an issue without further elaborating with a comment. 13 of them did elaborate with a comment.

While there is certainly room to improve these results, they are noticeable better than my first round of peer revision in term one. I no longer have peer review worksheets from term one to complete a quantitative comparison, but I recall the majority of the papers giving almost no useful feedback. Students mostly indicated that they couldn't find areas of improvement, or they simply didn't answer some of the questions.

Moving forward, some changes I would make would be going into the workshop more prepared. I went in with a general idea of what I wanted to do, but hadn't thought through all the aspects completely. It felt like something I would easily be able to figure out on the fly, but I was wrong. Secondly, I would set aside an entire class period for this assignment, and I wouldn't do it on a Thursday. I hadn't realized how long the new peer editing process would take, and I did not allocate enough time. Thirdly, I would make sure to include part of the workshop where students use the rubric to grade the essay. Although we created the rubric together as a class, some students seemed to lack understanding as to how the rubric functions. Using it review an essay that isn't theirs would help them to understand it more comprehensively.

Developing Inner Criteria for Success

I found this objective to be one of the most difficult to navigate, as well as the one with least amount of research to back it. The questions "How do we develop inner-criteria for success in our students", and "how do we measure if inner-criteria of success is developing" are ones that might be better answered with an empirical data-driven approach. This was not something I was able or willing to take on at the time of writing this paper, so I used what resources were available to me and gave it my best shot.

One approach I took that felt successful was putting together a PowerPoint and talking explicitly to my students about the INSPIRED model and inner criteria of success. It started off with a question about what the teacher's role in the classroom is and what is the student's role. I had them discuss in groups and then we discussed as a class. Their initial answers were mostly what I expected. They said the teacher should be fair, answer their questions, help them learn, correct their mistakes, remind them to not speak Arabic, remind them of their assignments, etc. They said that the students should pay attention, do their work, not use their phone, do their homework, try their best, speak in English, etc.

After collecting student responses, I ended up giving a mini lecture on the differences between Interlink and their previous schooling experiences. I explained that Interlink uses a discovery-based model and introduced the concept of teacher-facilitated vs teacher-led learning. We discussed whether someone learns something better if they have to find out for themselves or if someone just tells them the answer. The students agreed that they learn better if they find out themselves, but I question if the students truly believe that or if they said it because they figured that's what I considered to be "the right answer".

My students appeared to be receptive and agreeable to the ideas I was presenting. However, I wonder if it would have been more meaningful, or at a minimum, more student-centered, to guide them to those ideas rather than "deposit" them. In the future, I would start the discussion in a different way, in an attempt to lead them to "discover" the desired conclusion themselves.

With the mini-lecture aside, the rest of the presentation/conversation went really well. The next slide showed two groups of questions and asked the students what the difference was between them. Group 1 had the questions: "Is this good?", "Is this correct", "Is this long enough?", "How do you spell because?". Group 2 had the questions: "Do you think my voice

was loud enough?”, “Is it correct to say ‘she went’ or she goed”, “ Is ‘B-E-C-U-S-E” The correct spelling of because?”. Some of their responses included “One side depends on me and the other side depends on the teacher”. “The ones on this side, I have to think before I ask”. Their responses seemed to indicate that they understood and internalized, at least on a basic level, the concept, and benefits, of teacher facilitated vs teacher-led learning. It was really exciting!

The third part of this presentation was an attempt to shift student perspective about what a “speaking activity” looks like in class. I included this because I noticed in previous terms that students would only take a speaking assignment seriously if the only aim of the activity was speaking. For example, presentations, role plays, questions on the board that they needed to discuss with their groups. However, if I gave an assignment whose aim did not appear to be speaking related, but still provided ample opportunity for speaking to successfully complete the activity, students would often revert to Arabic. For example, an activity where the students had to design, draw, and then present a meaningful mural to be (hypothetically) painted on the walls of the university. The opportunity for English output was abundant-discussion of what to draw, how to draw it, what colors to use, disagreement about ideas, planning what to say when presenting it to the class, negotiation of who will say what and in which order, and the presentation itself. However, it was clear that the students viewed the objectives as “draw a mural and do a presentation”, and, therefore, used Arabic in every step except planning and doing the presentation.

In this part of the presentation, I gave the students three different examples and a brief description of activities we might do in class (see appendix x) and asked them to think about how they would use English to accomplish them. The first one, spontaneous speaking, was very straightforward. The second one, the GCP was a little bit less so. The majority of the students

said that they would use English in the presentation. One student then chimed in and said they would use English to work with their group. I prompted them to also consider that they would be using English (and their paraphrasing skills) while doing research. The final activity, the mural assignment I described above, was the least straightforward of the three. The students mentioned that they would use English in the presentation at the end, and some students suggested that they could write English phrases in the mural itself. Eventually, the same student as before mentioned again that they might use it to “talk about the idea” with their group.

Reflections:

There were 3 primary types of reflections I did with my students throughout the term, weekly reflection (see Appendix D), post-activity formal reflections (see Appendix E), and post-activity informal reflections. When I started the weekly reflection forms, I had a discussion with each class explaining that we would do them each week, my rationale, and that they would be allowed to use a translator to understand and answer the questions. Around week 4, I added the second page where I asked students about how helpful and interesting each in-class listening/reading was.

The two biggest challenges I faced with the students were openness and specificity. The biggest challenge I faced on my end was time constraints. Students would often write which activities we did that were helpful for them but give no elaboration as to why they were helpful. Similarly, they would rarely write anything under the “which activities were not helpful for you” question, but when they did, there was almost never an explanation as to why. I anticipated these issues, which was why I included instructions asking the students to specify, explained to them why it was important that they were specific, and told them that they did not need to write their names on the reflection forms. However, this did not seem to have too much of an impact.

It is hard to dissect the issue of students rarely providing feedback under the questions “which activities were not helpful for you” and “do you have any suggestions for the teacher”. It’s impossible to know whether they are frequently left blank because the students are truly happy with the content and the activities or if there’s another explanation such as fear of being rude, fear of possible retribution for negative feedback, a feeling that nothing will be changed even if they do give constructive criticism, or something else that I haven’t considered.

I do question if my lack of response to their feedback after the first two weeks contributed to this. On the first day of week two and week three, I started the class by reviewing the main points of what they reported in their reflections the Thursday before. For example, “Several of you mentioned as a suggestion that I should use Kahoot or other games. I can definitely do this for our vocabulary reviews and we’ll do a Kahoot later this week” or “Many of you mentioned that you need more practice with your presentation skills. We will do several more short, in-class presentations before your ICP so that you can practice.” I believe that teacher response is vital for student participation in this type of activity. Students need to feel like they are being heard and responded to.

In a dream world, or one in which I don’t have such strong work-life boundaries, I would have continued doing this for the entire term. However, due to many contributing factors, I was much more behind from week three and onward than I was the first two weeks. The first things that start to slip are those that are not “necessary” for class to continue. My priorities were prepping and planning for upcoming classes and grading the required assignments for our Project Grade Book (PGB), which is the document used to quantitatively assess student achievement and determine if they can move forward to the next level or not.

Unfortunately, activities such giving feedback on additional assignments, reviewing/assessing weekly reflections, and others have to be considered as “bonus” items to be done if I have sufficient time. While I do usually glance over the reflection papers as students hand them in to get a general idea of what they’re thinking, it’s not really enough to give a response to class showing that I read and digested their feedback.

There are a few things I’m left to question as I consider how I move forward with reflections in the future. The first is that while it’s my belief that students need to be heard in order for them to feel like the reflections are valuable, I have not looked into the research supporting (or disproving) this idea yet. Maybe it’s not necessary EVERY week, or maybe students only need to see that changes are made in the classroom according to their feedback, without a complete debrief at the beginning of each week. Secondly, what can I do to make reflections-doing them in the classroom and reviewing them outside of class time, more efficient? Effective classroom practices can only be truly effective if they are sustainable, and something that takes up so much class and prep time, is likely not sustainable over the long term.

Personal Reflection

I went into this IPP thinking that it would be an opportunity for me to dig into the research of classroom practices that I didn’t feel I knew enough about, learn how to implement those practices correctly, and then do some small tinkering to figure out how they work best in my classroom. I would consider this endeavor to be semi-victorious.

The areas in which I could find the most relevant research, rubric co-creation and peer review, are the areas where I had the most tangible achievements. It’s probably not a coincidence that these practices, as well as syllabus co-creation, are easier to study quantitatively than the

other two areas. Inner criteria for success and reflection were difficult topics to find pertinent literature on. Logistically, I had difficulty accessing Gattengo's seminal work "Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way", so I only had access to chapter two. Other authors tended to simply refer to the importance of inner criteria as a concept, rather than expand on how exactly to develop it or how to tell if it is being developed. Reflection in the field of ESL tended to focus mostly on ESL teacher training rather than in-class implementation. The few articles that focused on the classroom itself, seemed to only discuss how reflection was a useful practice rather than go in-depth about how to do it effectively.

I would say that, in the end, I feel very confident with rubric co-creation and peer editing in my classroom, although I plan to continue tinkering and making small adjustments. I felt good about my syllabus co-creation, although students voting on weekly topics is very simple to implement. I have enough research on the topic to feel optimistic about attempting to try something more in-depth in future, likely with a higher-level class.

When it comes to inner criteria development and effective reflection, I am still feeling quite lost. I felt a definite shift in students learning to rely on themselves and their peers rather than on me. This could especially be seen in the type of questions students were asking me. However, I felt that I failed to help the students shift their mindset from "What can I do to get the best grade" to "What can I do to get the most out of this learning experience". The reflection part of this IPP feels almost like a complete failure. I never really felt like I was able to get students to truly and honestly reflect on their learning experiences. I am also feeling dejected by the fact that there is not a lot of research for me to turn back to in order to support future efforts in these areas.

Finally, the last thing I want to reflect on is the maintenance of work-life balance (WLB) as it relates to the sustainability of one's teaching practice. While WLB has only been mentioned a few times throughout this paper, it has remained a topic of concern, frequently discussed amongst my colleagues and with my SIT professors. I think that many people, especially those in the education field, will be shocked to hear about, and perhaps find it difficult to respect, a teacher who admits that she knowingly lets the quality of her classes drop.

Society expects teachers to do their work out of a passion for education and the betterment of the community, rather than money. We are often fed romanticized tales of teachers who work day and night and are rewarded not with overtime pay, but with student successes. Teachers are gaslit into believing they are selfish if they refuse to work extra hours for no pay so that students can have a better educational experience. Administrations, and the public, prey on the fact that teachers are usually compassionate, caring, and open-hearted individuals. Those traits are used to manipulate them into believing that it is their responsibility to make up for the gaping holes left in educational systems by public policy and poorly led administration.

The fact is, teachers are not responsible for performing free labor, nor are they responsible for the failings in the classroom that occur as a result of not performing unpaid labor. Furthermore, it's not sustainable for teachers to do so. When it comes to this IPP, I question "what is the point of researching and attempting to implement these practices if I simply don't have time to sustain them within my 40-hour work week?". Since I am unwilling to bend my WLB boundaries, the only thing that I can consider is "how can I make these practices more efficient?" and "which practices require front-loading a lot of effort but are rewarded with time saved and more effective learning towards the end?" These are questions I will continue to ponder and experiment with as I continue my journey as an educator.

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Appendix A
Journal Reflection Sheet

1. Why do you think we write in our journals?
2. How do you think writing in Journals will help you?
3. How many days a week do you think we should write in our journals? Circle an answer

2 3 4

4. What do you think should be graded in your journal writing? Circle up to 3 answers

Grammar vocabulary spelling length (how much you write) content handwriting

Other _____

Appendix B

Self-editing checklist

Did you check...		
..that there is a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence	Yes	No
..that you have correct subject-verb agreement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> she has , she wants <input type="checkbox"/> she have , she want	Yes	No
..that you have a full stop at the end of each sentence	Yes	No
..that you have both simple and compound sentences?	Yes	No
..that your spelling is correct?	Yes	No
..that you have transition words?	Yes	No
..that you have a comma after your transition words?	Yes	No
..that each of your sentences has a subject and a verb?	Yes	No
Circle the subject and underline the verb in every sentence		

Appendix C

Peer Review worksheet

Content

Author: _____ Editor: _____

Instructions:

1. Read your partner's paper one time
2. Read your partner's paper again and answer the following questions:

Yes/ no questions			Short answer questions
			What is the topic of the essay?
Is there a topic Sentence?	Yes	No	Underline the topic sentence in the essay
Is there a conclusion sentence?	Yes	No	Underline the conclusion sentence in the essay
Are there any places the writer could be more clear (parts that you don't understand)	Yes	No	If yes, circle and label these parts on the essay "NC". How could the author make these parts clearer?
Did the author write any effects in the cause paragraph, or causes in the effects paragraph?	Yes	No	If yes, circle and label the sentence as "CE". Write any comments or suggestions you have for the author
Does the author use many cause and effect conjunctions? (Because, so, as a result, therefore, in order to)	Yes	No	If no, write some suggestions for how the author can use more conjunctions.
Does the author have any repeating ideas	Yes	No	If yes, circle the repeating ideas and label "R". Write any comments or suggestions you have for the author
	Yes	No	Do you have any ideas/suggestions for the author related to the content of their paper?

Mechanics

Author: _____ Editor: _____

Instructions:

1. Read your partner's paper one time
2. Read your partner's paper again and answer the following questions:

Yes/ no questions			Short answer questions
			What is the topic of the essay?
Does the author use both simple and compound sentences?	Yes	No	If no, suggest some places where the author can put a compound sentence.
Are there any sentence fragments?	Yes	No	If yes, circle the sentence and write "SF". Write any comments or suggestions you have for the author
Are there any run on sentences?	Yes	No	If yes, circle the sentence and write "ROS". Write any comments or suggestions you have for the author
Does the author use full stops and commas correctly?	Yes	No	If no, write here what you think they need to change
Are there are any words that you believe the author spelled incorrectly?	Yes	No	If yes, circle the word and write SP. Write any comments or suggestions you have for the author
Does the author use enough transition words	Yes	No	

Appendix D

Weekly Reflection Form (Example)

1. What are 3 things you learned this week? BE SPECIFIC

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. What are 2-4 activities we did this week that were helpful for you? Why were they helpful? BE SPECIFIC

3. What are 1-2 activities we did this week that were NOT helpful? Why were they not helpful? BE SPECIFIC

4. What are 2 things we learned about this week that you still need to practice?

5. Do you have any suggestions for the teacher?

6. Answer the questions about our In-class reading this week

a. Fashion Forward (eco fashion)

How **helpful** was this reading for you 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How **interesting** was this reading to you 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b. Najdi Fashion

How **helpful** was this reading for you 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How **interesting** was this reading to you 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Appendix E

Sample post-activity reflection

Interview Reflection:

1. When you were **asking the questions** to your partner, what did you do when you didn't know or understand a word in English?
2. What do you do when you are speaking in English, but your classmate responds to you in Arabic?
3. In the interview, what percentage (0-100%) of the time were you speaking in English? What percentage (0-100%) of the time were you speaking in Arabic?
4. Are you happy with the percentage that you are speaking in English? Why or why not?
5. What can you do to increase the amount of time that you are speaking in English in class?