Explorations in Teacher Education

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From the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of *Explorations in Teacher Education,* the publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Teacher Education and Development Special Interest Group (TEDsig). This is the last issue for 2013, and I apologize for the delay for those JALT TEDsig members who are waiting by their e-mail box for the latest mailing. I apologize for the lateness.

Included in this issue are two articles and one book review. The first article, **John Blake** shares a reciprocal observation project that he conducted with a colleague that could help any teacher improve their teaching practice through reflection and critical discussion. Following this, **Paul Anthony Marshall**, recommends a time-efficient practice to aid teacher self-development. This article will be especially useful to TEDsig members who are involved in either teacher training with advice for reformulating lesson plans in the on-going quest that we are all facing to continue to improve our teaching and research practices. This form of action research provides the type of self-reflective practice that leads to more stimulating and satisfying classes. In the third article, **Michael Sullivan** reviews *Paul Nation's* text *What Every EFL Teacher Should Know?*

Finally, I hope this is the last issue that will be shepherded through by asking friends and colleagues to review articles. From the next issue, there will be a change in the direction of *Explorations in Teacher Education*. From the spring 2014 issue, all articles will be reviewed by members of the newly forming *Explorations in Teacher Education* Editorial Board, which will be overseen by the new Assistant Edtitor for ETE, **Scot Matsuo.** This will mark the shift to full journal status for the editorial content in *Explorations in Teacher Education.* We hope that JALT TEDsig members who would like to contribute to the development of others will be willing to volunteer for the editorial board. Please contact the editor at

jalt.ted.ete.editor@gmail.com

if you are interested in adding your voice to the conversation.

Tamara Swenson, Editor,
Explorations in Teacher Education

TED SIG Information

The Teacher Education and Development SIG is a network of foreign language instructors dedicated to becoming better teachers and helping others teach more effectively. Active since 1993, our members teach at primary and secondary schools, universities, language schools, and in various other contexts.

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The effect and affect of reciprocal observation

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Abstract

The primary aim of this extended reciprocal observation project was to improve teaching practice through reflection and critical discussion. The author and a colleague observed each other teaching once a week for one semester. Both had similar training backgrounds and had frequently been observed during their teaching careers. Ground rules for behaviour in the classroom were established for the observer, but unlike most peer observation of teaching, there was no focus on any particular aspect of teaching. A reflective journal was kept throughout the observation period. It was expected that both participants would acquire some anecdotes, games and activities to add to their armory of classroom techniques; but neither predicted the major outcome of this extended research project: something more important than any of the gains made professionally.

Keywords

Peer observation of teaching, reciprocal observation

The inspiration for undertaking this action research stemmed from a desire to improve teaching practice. Expectations for improvement were based on three main beliefs. First, that observing an experienced and well-qualified teacher would be a rich source of ideas to adopt in one's own teaching. Second, the opportunity to focus on learners during another teacher's class would enable one to concentrate on the students and their learning. Third, the feedback provided by the observers would enable the observees to reflect on their actual teaching practice.

It was hoped that the research would be both heuristic, enabling the participants to discover something that they were not aware of; and illuminative, i.e. aiming to throw light on some aspect of the teaching and learning process.

Peer observation of teaching (POT) tends to be asymmetrical with the observer being a more senior member of staff. Most peer observation of

teaching is not reciprocal. This paper, however, focuses on reciprocal observation in which both participants observed and were observed by each other. There is some research on reciprocal POT in clinical teaching (Snydman, Chandler, Rencic, & Sung, 2013) and higher education (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008; Scott & Miner, 2008), but to date there is a paucity of research on this area in the realm of English language teaching.

Literature review

Peer observation of teaching is one form of professional development designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning (e.g. Bennett & Barp, 2008; Byrne, Brown & Challen, 2010). Lublin (2002) defines peer observation of teaching for development purposes as "a collaborative and reciprocal process whereby one peer observes another's teaching …and provides supportive and constructive feedback". Bell (2005) provides a more specific definition peer observation of teaching, namely:

> collaborative, developmental activity in which professionals offer mutual support by observing each other teach; explaining and discussing what was observed; sharing ideas about teaching; gathering student feedback on teaching effectiveness; reflecting on understandings, feelings, actions and feedback and trying out new ideas. (p. 3)

McMahon, Barrett & O'Neill (2007, p.505) describe peer observation of teaching as subjecting oneself to "scrutiny by peers, and use the professional dialogue and shared reflection that follows to improve professional practice".

Among the varied models of POT, there is one collaborative model that emphasizes the desire to learn from each other with no imposed agenda. Peer observation in this model is genuinely collaborative with no "clear distinction between the one who is the developer and the one being developed" (Gosling & O`Connor, 2005, p.13).

Observers typically create written accounts or observation notes of the observed class. Malderez (2003) describes three types of accounts of observation notes, namely descriptive, interpretative and evaluative, the differences between which are exemplified in Figure 1.

Each of the types of account could be beneficial, but descriptive ones are less likely to be interpreted negatively, and avoid the need for any sugaring of the pill that could be necessary in more evaluative feedback. Descriptive feedback is often recommended in the literature for effective teacher development (Sullivan, Buckle, Nicky & Atkinson, 2012; Wiggins, 2012)

Numerous benefits of POT have been reported in the literature. Hendry & Oliver (2012) assert that evidence is emerging that "the process of observing is just as if not more valuable than being observed and given feedback". Peer observation has been found to develop collegiality (Bell, 2005; Quinlan & Åkerlind, 2000). Peer observation enables sharing of ideas and teaching activities (D`Andrea, 2002; Martin & Double,1998). Kemp & Gosling (2000) suggest that a significant benefit of peer observation of teaching is the promotion of critical discussion on all aspects of teaching.

Type of account	Example of observation notes	Example of observation notes
Descriptive	The girl cried.	The girl cried.
Interpretive	She was sad.	She was happy.
Evaluative	The teacher upset her.	The teacher made her feel happy.

Figure 1: Examples of different types of accounts of observation

There are, however, potential drawbacks of engaging in POT. According to Cosh (1998, p.172), the process could become "a form of mutual back-patting, meaningless for genuine professional development". Cosh (1998) also notes teachers may attempt to give model lessons rather than show the type of lessons that they normally deliver. Any power imbalance can negatively affect the developmental nature of POT (MacKinnon, 2001). POT could also become or be viewed as intrusive and restricting academic freedom (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005).

In the literature, a number of ways have been suggested to ameliorate potential drawbacks. Fullerton (2003) notes that a supportive and encouraging environment provides the ideal setting for teachers to learn. Jones (1993, p.12) advocates establishing ground rules for behaviour. Once such ground rule could be the use of descriptive rather than evaluative feedback.

The Study

Both participant-observers, the author and a colleague, are qualified teacher trainers and have been observed extensively albeit mainly by pre-service teachers. Reciprocal observation of a credit-bearing business English course for undergraduates in a Hong Kong university was arranged for one 50-minute teaching period a week for twelve weeks.

Before each observation, short briefings of between 2 and 15 minutes took place during which aims, activities and anticipated problems were described. In the first class, students were told that the observer was present for professional development and were asked not to direct questions to him. Observers made handwritten notes during the class, which mainly consisted of narrative descriptions of the teacher and/or student actions. A photocopy of the notes was made after the observation and passed to the

observee. After each observation, there was a debriefing lasting an average of 10 minutes, at which discussion ensued on any aspect of student or teacher behaviour.

Adopting an introspective approach, a participant observation journal was kept to record reflective thoughts and feelings regarding the observations. To analyse the affective data, notes in the journal were coded using a grounded approach. The code expanded to over 20 items.

Results

The 13 most frequently mentioned items, measured by the number of coded occurrences and account for over 80% of the total items, are categorized below into non-affective and affective results.

Non-affective (Behavioural and Cognitive) results

Teaching ideas: Rather than relying on tried-and-tested techniques, we were both inspired to experiment and try out ideas gleaned from the observations. As anticipated, a significant amount of borrowing, adapting and adopting of teaching activities and materials occurred during the observation period.

Learner-centred: The observed teacher effectively handed over to students tasks traditionally associated with the teacher, such as taking the register and writing on the whiteboard. This freed him up to focus on enabling students to achieve the lesson's objectives. This was an area that deserved more focus in my own classes.

L1 usage: Hearing the students' mother tongue used in the classroom by the teacher provided the stimulus to reflect on my own language policy and review the related experimental and empirical research literature.

Recalling the forgotten: In the observation notes, my colleague often recorded verbatim

examples used on the spur of the moment, which I had forgotten. One such example was an off-the-cuff example of an ergative verb, which inspired me to create a practice activity using common ergative verbs.

Visuals: Focusing on the students in the observed class enabled me to notice that the glare of the sun, the cursive writing and the size of the letters made reading words on the whiteboard difficult. Afterwards, in my own class, much to my chagrin, I noticed that my students had similar difficulties in deciphering my handwriting.

Physical contact: Having worked in regions and institutions in which any physical contact with students, particularly the opposing gender was banned, I had continued to completely avoid touching students. This practice was re-assessed for the local context once I noticed the positive response from the students of my colleague who infrequently, but yet sometimes used an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

Physical environment: In summer, the effect of the tilt of the blinds and the thermostat setting of the air conditioner and comments such as "blinds down – cool", brought home the importance of the physical environment and was a timely reminder of the Maslowian hierarchy of needs in which students' physiological needs have to be satisfied before learning can be effective.

Openness: Both of us wanted honest and direct feedback. In the second week of observations, we agreed on "no mutual backslapping". This was followed by a frank disclosure and discussion of our perceived weaknesses. Intriguingly, none of these had been noted during the observations, and despite disclosing them, none were ever noted by the other party during any subsequent observations.

Affective results

Anxiety: Although I had been observed numerous times during my teaching career prior to the commencement of this reciprocal observation, there was still some effect on my teaching. There were no butterflies in my stomach nor worries about any 'hidden' weaknesses being discovered. However, there was a knowingness that I would be observed by a critical colleague whose opinion I respected. This meant that any planning done was slightly more thorough and it seemed to me that I was more conscientious during my observed classes. This may, however, have been due to a heightened degree of self-reflection during the class to attempt to anticipate what the observer's slant would be on micro-decisions made during class. As the weeks turned into months, this anxiety reduced greatly, yet I was always conscious that there was an observer present.

Content choice: When planning lessons for the week, I was highly aware of the particular teaching period that would be observed. We had agreed not to do anything different to show each other, but there was a feeling that the observer's time would be better spent if I taught a particular aspect planned for later in the week rather than that allocated for the teaching hour.

Use of names: Noticing the usage of students' names throughout my colleague's classes gave me the impetus to try to learn all of my students' names, which was no small undertaking given that I taught over a thousand students each year.

Positive attitude: Participating in this project resulted in a renewed confidence and enthusiasm in my teaching - not due to any compliments received - but simply as a result of the heightened awareness from simply being involved in this action research.

Friendship: At the beginning of the research period our relationship was collegial. We worked

in the same department, exchanged social niceties, and on rare occasions swapped teaching tips or worksheets. We were not, however, lunchtime buddies nor drinking partners. As the observations and discussions continued, our collegial relationship developed into a truer friendship in which we could frankly discuss any aspect of our work or personal lives.

Conclusion

In line with the assertion by Hendry & Oliver (2012), the act of observing was extremely beneficial in terms of professional development for the observer possibly more so than for the observee. However, above any of the gains in professional development, the most important outcome of this project is the friendship and trust of a colleague. I would wholeheartedly echo the suggestion of Penny Ur (2012) to make a "mutual arrangement with a like-minded colleague" to observe and give feedback to each other.

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Submissions Welcome

The Teacher Education & Development SIG welcomes submissions to *Explorations in Teacher Education* that address aspects related to the SIGs core mission of expanding and exploring issues in teacher education.

Submissions must conform to the Guidelines of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition (APA, 6). Manuscripts should be prepared using either MS-Word or as a text document. Graphs and figures should be sent as PDFs in separate files. Author names should NOT be included on the manuscript. The Author Names and contact information should appear in the body of the e-mail.

Manuscripts must be submitted by email to:

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The Subject box should read:

TED ETE submission: Author Name

The body of the e-mail should include the names of all authors and a contact address (for email and postal maling).

Reformulating Lesson Plans For Teacher Self-Development

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Abstract

This article recommends a simple, time-efficient practice to aid teacher self-development which is called 'Reformulating Lesson Plans'. The details of this are explained in full along with the methods of trial and testing undertaken over a period of several years by the writer/researcher. A variety of similar practices studied during the past several decades are examined in order to locate the current technique in the literature. Comparisons are made and differences are highlighted. The result is a plethora of ready-to-use self-development procedures for teachers in every field to begin using today.

The Paradox

There is a frustrating paradox in teacher development and this article offers a way out. You may recognise the scenario: institution-wide employee-development plans mean that managers or mentors have to encourage teachers to be involved in self-development. And the paradox is this: someone else has to decide whether the teacher has self-developed.

To me at least, this is a floor-less (not flawless) system. Every educator wants to improve themselves and be great at what they do. However, having to do this within a prescribed time-frame, providing concrete evidence, and to then have it scrutinised and sometimes even graded by their superior can take the adventure out of teaching and possibly create resentment towards the superior and the system. For some,

the term 'forced-development' would be a more fitting term than 'self-development'.

I personally couldn't agree more with Harnett and Carr (1996, p. 49) who feel that:

> 'teachers should be able to choose, uncoerced and for themselves what kind of teacher development they want.'

Although this would be the ideal situation, it is rarely the case; for the purpose of ease, the methods of development selected for us are those that are most visible and therefore the easiest to monitor and evaluate. The main contenders are usually observation or peer-monitoring. These suit some but others find them stressful and intrusive.

Unfortunately, striking these methods off the list leaves limited options. A lot of teachers either struggle to provide evidence to the line

manager breathing down their neck, or at least feel uncomfortable in doing so. One reason for this discomfort is that some processes, such as teaching journals, can be quite personal in nature and the teacher might not necessarily want to share the results. For these individuals, not only are the methods of appraisal disagreeable, they are also haunted by the paradox.

So, I was naturally overjoyed when I stumbled upon a solution to this dilemma which can satisfy both teacher and manager.

Several years ago I was teaching the same lessons to 150 students. Lessons were repeated several times so that students could sign up and attend at any time they wished within a certain period, in classes of 16. I was new to the country and the culture so I needed a way to reflect on how successful certain activities had been, do a brief diagnosis of the potential reasons for any problems, and to hypothesise as to how they might be improved for the next time round.

This situation gave birth to a technique I call 'reformulating lesson plans'. I have developed this method during the intervening years whenever I have had to repeat a lesson or even with common topics or grammar points which I knew I would inevitably teach again soon. While definitely not rocket-science (and very doubtfully original) by any means, it has led to a honing and streamlining of my lesson planning and material writing.

Reformulating lesson plans

Much of the literature in this field talks of the self-discipline needed in terms of time and effort, to conduct self-development exercises. One of the reasons I have continued to enjoy reformulating lesson plans for over five years, is that it doesn't put unnecessarily large time demands on busy teachers but is nevertheless a very effective form of self-development.

This technique involves thinking reflectively just after a lesson and writing notes directly onto lesson plans in order to improve the plan for the next time this lesson is taught. I keep my notes brief and can best be described as a process or reflective spiral of adjustments and readjustments that I go through which ensures that I never fail to learn from the experience of ever single lesson.

The process can involve aspects of well-established teacher-development techniques such as journal writing, analysing critical incidents, self-monitoring, and my own personal favourite; action research.

When reformulating lesson plans, I often make changes to the timing, interaction patterns, techniques for presenting new information, materials and many other aspects of the procedure. At times I have discarded some activities altogether and designed new ones, changed the order of lesson stages, or missed out less essential parts to make way for a greater focus on difficulties that were not already predicted. All of this can provide the next set of students with more support or more practice depending on the extent to which the first group of students grasp or struggle with an activity.

One major benefit of reformulating lesson plans is that the improvements are immediate for my next group of learners (in my case this used to be only three or four days later, but now may be the following semester). I know that the next time I teach that lesson it will be better designed. I also become aware of how that lesson could have been better planned from the beginning. This can then be applied as experiential knowledge (or by referring directly to reformulated lesson plans) and allows subsequent lessons to be planned much more effectively as a result.

Support for reformulating lesson plans as a technique for self-development

One day, while feeling pleased with a lesson I had improved, I was hit with a sudden bout of curiosity as to whether other teachers were using similar techniques. I had never heard other teachers talk about it or seen anyone do it where I was working. I felt it was a useful technique in terms of proven results, but I wanted to have this validated by locating it in the field of research on teacher self-development.

I began to research literature which touches on similar techniques. The results of this research are detailed in this section of this article. This small amount of research provided me with a wealth of ideas to try out; some of which I am still utilizing to this day. It is my hope that others can benefit from these ideas too.

Reformulating lesson plans fits very closely with critical reflection for which there are several closely-related models.

Critical Reflection

"The preparation of reflective teachers is a goal which has a long history in teacher education." (Zeichner, 1987)

The fundamental idea behind 'critical reflection' is to examine the methodological reasons behind classroom procedures. If teachers examine aspects of their teaching which could be changed, then they are more able to avoid failures, identify areas of strength, and improve what they do. One of the main attributes of this approach is that teachers can do it independently and alongside their normal teaching.

Models for the process of reflection

Over the years, teacher-researchers have produced a variety of models to explain the stages of their particular cycle of reflection. Cruikshank (Cruickshank et al. 1981, Cruickshank and Applegate 1981), and Schön (1983), among many others have pioneered research into reflective practice, which correlates closely with action research. Although they disagree slightly on the details, their models all illustrate a cycle which is essentially made up of planning, action, observing (or recording) and then reflection. The different models are all very similar but differ in the number of stages and the starting point of the cycle.

The Action Research Spiral

Of the various models for reflective practice, the spiral model devised by Kemmis and McTaggert (1988) correlates with my reformulating process more closely than the simpler circular cycle because after one cycle the teacher is certainly in a different place than when they started (hence the spiral as opposed to a circular model). The steps in the second cycle may be the same, but the plan has already been reformulated. Progress has already been made.

Correlating critical reflection with reformulating lesson plans is most easily explained by dividing it into the following stages: planning the lesson, teaching the lesson, making notes on the lesson plan, and reformulating the lesson plan by making alterations to the original.

A more specific form of lesson improvement which falls within the cycles mentioned above, is Neil England's technique for improving teaching materials which he knows will be re-used, by writing directly onto them at the end of each lesson. This appears as a vignette in Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 35). He asks himself questions

regarding whether his learners received sufficient support, whether the planned activities under- or over-estimated his learners, and about the balance and success of input and practice. This process of reflection leads Neil to revise the way he will implement the materials during subsequent lessons.

I was reassured by the parallels between this process and the process I had been using. Yet there were still further discoveries to come.

Research into keeping a teaching journal and lesson reports suggests that the process of writing itself triggers in-depth analysis on various levels. One advocate of this sort of writing is Belinda Ho.

Comparisons between my technique and Belinda Ho's reflective lesson plans

Reformulating lesson plans and reflective lesson plans are both forms of self-monitoring. These two ideas both involve improvements to lesson plans which are taught more than once, and both involve writing directly onto the lesson plans. However, although they are similar, they are certainly not identical.

The main aspect in which the two techniques differ is writing style. My own style is more functional than descriptive. I reflect on the lesson and make concise notes which indicate specific changes in procedure. In my case, principles, beliefs, and careful self-analysis are behind the notes and decisions made, but are rarely expressed in writing. However, Ho's (1995) writing style is quite similar to that of keeping a teaching journal. She suggests "write diary entries on issues related to principles and beliefs that underlie teaching, and issues that go beyond what happens in the classroom." (Ho, 1995, p. 67, emphasis mine)

An additional piece of research which I could relate to was Ho and Richards (1993), where they analysed journal entries by teachers and judged writing about the following things (among others), to be critically reflective: justification, opinion, contradictions between theory and practice, knowledge, experience, evaluating lessons, diagnosing problems, solutions to problems, perception of self as a teacher, personal growth and goals, and asking for reasons.

When comparing this list to my own notes on the lesson plan in Appendix 1, it is clear that the reformulating process involves thinking reflectively but includes very little written evidence of issues that Ho and Richards consider to be critically reflective. However, if the process of writing about teaching can encourage the same kind of organisation of thoughts, and self-analysis as other kinds of writing (travel diaries, letters, etc.), then there is a lot to be gained from it in terms of understanding one's previously subconscious thought process. It could be possible to add a stage to this process or to change it slightly to incorporate more writing which would hopefully encourage more self-analysis.

Conclusion

Despite now having a better awareness of my learners' culture and needs, I still reformulate lesson plans in order to provide my learners with the best and most suitable activities I can provide. Teachers will be able to relate to the fact that there is no end-point at which you can sit back and say 'I'm the best teacher I can be'. Teacher self-development is a lifelong process.

It seems to me a reasonable proposition that teachers at any stage of their careers could benefit from adopting or at least experimenting with any of the approaches mentioned above. I first tried this approach after five and a half years of teaching and my students and I are still benefiting from it now.

The silver-lining is that the written evidence provided can also be given to line managers as evidence of self-development. Even though I am lucky enough to have escaped (at least temporarily) to somewhere with a more teacher-led form of development, it is comforting to know that there is a least one paradox which can be defeated.

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Join the Conversation

Talk to your colleagues. Share your experiences. Explain the lessons you have learned. Become part of the conversation on teacher education and development. TEDsig welcomes submissions to *Explorations in Teacher Education* that address aspects related to the SIGs core mission of expanding and exploring issues in teacher education.

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The body of the e-mail should include the names of all authors and a contact address (for email and postal maling).

Book Review

What Should Every EFL Teacher Know? Paul Nation. Tokyo: Compass Publishing, 2013. 235 pp.

Reviewed by Michael Sullivan

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In the introduction of *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?*, Paul Nation writes about his extensive experience "training teachers of English for over forty years" in many non-native English countries (Nation, 2013, p. 6). Given his wealth of knowledge on EFL education, it comes as no surprise, then, that he has decided to write a kind of how-to book on the fundamentals of teaching EFL and on the ways to improve teacher and student development. The book is comprised of seventeen chapters, but it could be argued that the book is divided into two sections: half of the book is devoted to the teaching of particular language skills, whereas the other half focuses on how to deal with EFL classroom design, lesson planning, and student behavior. Throughout the book, however, is the notion that there are four key areas, or "strands" (p. 8), as the author puts it, which are essential components of any EFL course and that the techniques or activities in an EFL class or course should develop from one of these strands.

While the first half of the book addresses the EFL instructor as teacher and trainer of learners, the second half mainly considers the instructor as tester and planner. In the section on testing, Nation not only discusses what makes a good test but also what tests and record-keeping strategies are recommended for language skills. In the view of this instructor, this section is invaluable as it serves as a good resource on valid/reliable tests from which feedback can be written. Moreover, the recommended tests (e.g. interviews, analytic marking) are, as I can attest from my own experience, easy to carry out and can be applied to students at a variety of levels.

The section on planning is divided into two parts: planning a lesson and planning a course. In the case of the former, Nation wants the reader to know how to plan a lesson, how much time should be allotted for each activity and each lesson, and how activities should be chosen with the aid of lesson plan examples. These plans are, in my judgment, well-balanced and provide an template that is easy to follow. However, they are somewhat teacher-centered and the schedule is tight. This may make it a challenge to complete all the activities planned for the lesson, especially for the novice instructor). But, just as importantly, Nation tells the reader – and shows with "a wide range of examples" – how to regularly modify activities within the lesson plan (p. 167). I believe this is an important step because while repetition of skills should be encouraged to build up the student's confidence in that language skill area,

instructors should teach these skills in a variety of ways so as to maintain the student's interest.

As for planning a course, the book outlines the processes of curriculum and syllabus design, as they are integral to language course planning. For each type of design, Nation not only goes over their main parts, but also engages in some interesting debate. One debate related to syllabus design, for example, concerns the use of real materials in the classroom (pp. 184-185). From Nation's point of view, the use of real materials can be problematic for student development because the student may simply not know enough vocabulary, particularly as many of these may be relatively low-frequency words (p. 184). His point is that teachers should be wary of introducing authentic material. Students should not be exposed to a great deal of unfamiliar vocabulary all at once, except if the words from the real material are explained and defined beforehand, as the teacher may risk losing the student's interest in learning.

On the plus side, the book is consistent in presenting Nation's ideas in a way that even a novice teacher could appreciate. First, every chapter starts with a brief yet concise summary of the key points, and the four above-mentioned strands are mentioned to help categorize and assess proposed activities. Secondly, the book also provides, through each chapter's extra readings, online resources and other ideas which, I believe, a teacher can easily implement to teach a skill area. All of the above gives the book a somewhat systematic approach. Some might find it overbearing or even unnecessary, but if the book's intention is to reach teachers, both experienced and new, this approach is unquestionably wise.

What some may question, however, is Nation's choice of activities. For one thing, I wonder why many of the book's activities (e.g.

dictations, strip stories) are geared towards young and basic learners. I also question why many of the book's tasks for the EFL classroom can be done independently or in small groups/pairs (e.g. word cards, substitution practice, split-information activities), and without much critical analysis. Fortunately, Nation does include detailed activities that could be used for adult and higher level students. Furthermore, although some activities which he lists may be more suitable for younger learners, others fit neatly into the key strands of learning, are effective for assessment purposes, and provide for the collaborative/teacher-assisted learning which Donato (2000) suggests could help students better understand how language is produced, developed, and negotiated.

Overall, this book serves as an informative go-to book for EFL instructors. It is written in a jargon-free, easy-to-read style that will appeal to all, especially teachers new to the field. Moreover, it supplies a great deal of useful activities, for both small and large groups. In addition, Nation not only provides the latest research but also gives persuasive reasons for his recommended approaches. In closing, the book is a welcome addition to the library of any EFL instructor, as it both covers the basics in what and how to teach an EFL class and provides up-to-date information and ideas to pique the interest of even the most learned EFL instructor.

References

Donato, R. (2000). Sociocultural contributions to understanding the foreign and second language classroom. In J.P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 27-50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

JALT Teacher Education & Development SIG

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