5   The teacher

Introduction to the chapter

1   Contents

2   General discussion of issues

The Tasks in this chapter focus on teaching styles, teachers' roles and teachers' use of language. In each case the aim of the Discussion Tasks is to help participants to become more aware of themselves as teachers, and more aware of their preferences, predispositions and general classroom practice. The material describes a range of possibilities in these respects, and participants can be encouraged to experiment with alternatives to their 'normal' behaviour in the classroom.

Classroom-based Task 4 aims to extend the participants' thinking about the use of the learners' first language in the classroom by encouraging them to explore the learners' reactions to its use (and/or non-use). Classroom-based Task 5 aims to help participants to become more aware of their own use of language in giving instructions as a basis, possibly, for making conscious modifications to the way they normally do this.

Discussion Task 10 and Classroom-based Task 5 are particularly relevant to teachers working in environments where the learners all share a common first language (or lingua franca). The other Tasks are intended to be of relevance and interest to all teachers.

3   Reading

Byrne, D. (1987). *Techniques for Classroom Interaction*. Longman.
Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Longman (Chapter 1).

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Malamah-Thomas, A. (1987). *Classroom Interaction*. Oxford University Press.
Underwood, M. (1987). *Effective Class Management*. Longman.

The Tasks in this chapter involve the participants in introspecting and comparing experience. Reading is not essential, and these references are provided for trainers who, in preparing to use the Tasks, would like to remind themselves of some of the general issues raised in them, and for participants who would like to pursue particular interests which have arisen in their discussion.

The clearest and most straightforward introduction to this topic is the chapter in Harmer. Byrne and Underwood write at greater length, but are clear and to the point. Both of them cover issues of classroom management from a much broader perspective than that considered in these Tasks.

Malamah-Thomas provides a very different perspective. Her book, based around tasks itself, focusses on interaction from a more theoretical point of view and is of more tangential relevance to the Tasks in this chapter. Of particular value in the book is the range of instruments described for observing, recording and becoming more aware of the interactions which take place in classrooms.

5   The teacher

Discussion Task 7

General teaching styles

Aim   This Task encourages you to reflect on your own
preferred styles of teaching, and to consider alternative
styles.

TASK

Section A   *General discussion*

1   Think of the activities you most enjoy and least enjoy in your
lessons. Are these activities in which you tend to play a
dominant role or a 'back seat' role? Do you see yourself in
the classroom more as a 'leader' or as a 'manager'?

2   To what extent do you feel that the tradition in which you
work allows you to teach in a style which feels comfortable
to you? (For example, some teachers may feel personally out
of sympathy with an approach which requires the teacher to
be very dominant.)

3   Has your teaching style changed during your career?

4   Do you envisage that it will change further?

5   Do you consciously experiment with adopting different
'styles'?

Section B   *Identifying personal styles and characteristics*

Look at the following list of adjectives which could be used to
characterise teaching styles and to describe teachers' qualities:

relaxed	patient	dynamic
resourceful	attentive	creative
innovative	caring	intuitive
hard-working	well-prepared	enthusiastic
authoritative	flexible	accurate
space-giving	clear	systematic
well-informed		

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Discussion Task 7

Task

1   In groups, ensure that you agree about the meaning of each term, and the distinctions between them.
    Example An *innovative* teacher is one who favours approaches which are original in themselves whereas a *creative* teacher may produce original materials but within a traditional approach.

2   Add any adjectives to the list which describe further qualities you feel are missing.

3   These adjectives are intended to describe positive qualities. Do you feel that any of them could have a negative side as well? In what way?
    Example A dynamic teacher may not provide the learners with sufficient 'space' to set their own pace and to initiate topics of personal interest.

4   Working individually, choose the four items from this list which you feel most accurately describe your own teaching style or characteristics. Put them into an order according to how characteristic of yourself you think they are.
      Explain to the other people in your group the reasons for the choices you have made.

5   The teacher

Notes

Discussion Task 7

General teaching styles

Timing   Section A c. 20 minutes
          Section B c. 20 minutes
          Total   c. 40 minutes

Suggestions for procedure

In this Task it is important that participants work in groups
where they feel comfortable. This is particularly important with
regard to the final activity. The ideal group size for this Task is
three.

Section A   *General discussion*

This part of the Task can be discussed in small groups.

Section B   *Identifying personal styles and characteristics*

It may be necessary for the trainer to clarify some of the terms.
Unless the group is very large, this can probably be done in
response to individual questions while the small groups are
discussing the points.
    The rest of the Task can be discussed in small groups. Plenary
feedback may be desirable only if participants feel it would be
useful and interesting.

General discussion and possible outcomes

This Task differs from most of the Tasks in this book in that it
quite deliberately looks at the classroom from the point of view
of the teacher rather than the learner. It also invites teachers to
think of themselves in such a way that discussion should be
closer to a model of sharing than of arguing or investigating.

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Discussion Task 7

Notes

This Task may give rise to questions about the difference between teaching *style/characteristics* and *role*. The role of the teacher depends on the aims and nature of a particular classroom activity, whereas the style embraces the more general predispositions of the teacher. Thus, a teacher can act as a *manager* (role) in giving instructions, and do this in a way which is caring/uncaring, patient/irritated, attentive/distracted, enthusiastic/bored, etc.

This Task focusses on the personal responses of individuals, which makes it difficult to anticipate any particular outcome.

In response to Question 3 in Section B of the Task, an argument could probably be advanced in the case of each of the adjectives, although some of the accompanying circumstances would have to be far-fetched.

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5   The teacher

Discussion Task 8

Teachers' roles

Aim   This Task aims to help you to develop your awareness of the different roles teachers perform, and to consider the appropriateness of different roles. It is intended to help you to develop a more principled basis on which to make decisions about the planning and teaching of lessons, particularly with regard to the range of roles available to you.

TASK

Section A   *Roles and functions*

Look at the following 'role definitions' and the list of some of a teacher's functions.

For each of these functions, decide which role is most appropriate (in some cases more than one 'role' may be involved):

Roles

a) DIAGNOSTICIAN
b) PLANNER
c) MANAGER
d) PROVIDER

Functions

i)   To find out (as far and as consistently as possible) the needs, interests, language difficulties and preferred learning styles of the students.
ii)   To cater for these (as far as group exigencies allow).
iii) To foster a group feeling (cooperation, liking, common aims, mutual confidence, etc.).
iv)   To ensure that learners have clear short and long-term learning objectives.
v)   To assess the progress of individuals and of the class as a whole.
vi)   To ensure that learners are aware of this progress.
vii) To encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

Task

viii) **To vary patterns of interaction within the lesson according to the precise aims and the nature/feeling of the group.**

ix) **To ensure that the students find their involvement sufficiently challenging.**

x) **To analyse and present realistic 'chunks' of the target language for students to process.**

xi) **To select and introduce activities and materials for language work.**

xii) **To help students develop positive, individual strategies for learning.**

Example *Function (i) – Role (a):* The teacher is clearly acting as a diagnostician in performing this function, although the results of this diagnosis will subsequently form the basis for the teacher to act as a planner (b).

Section B   *Alternative ways of classifying roles*

For some purposes you might want a model which offers a greater number of categories than the one above. Make a list of further categories you might use to classify the roles a teacher performs.

Example Entertainer

Section C   *Roles and lesson activities*

Either:

Look at Lesson Plan B (*Resources bank*, Section 2, Resource 9, page 302). Using your preferred system for classifying a teacher's roles, specify the role the teacher is likely to adopt at each of the points marked 'R'. Compare your answers with those of other members of the group. How do you account for any differences?

1	7	12
2	8	13
3	9	14
4	10	15
5	11	16
6		

Example *1 Manager:* The teacher is involved here in the physical management of the classroom, organising the location and grouping of students in the room.

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Task

Or:

Watch a 10-minute section of a videoed lesson. As you watch it a second time, record the changes which take place in the teacher's roles. Compare your list of changes with those of other members of the group. How do you account for any differences between the lists?

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Discussion Task 8

Notes

Teachers' roles

Timing Section A c. 15 minutes
Section B c. 10 minutes
Section C c. 35 minutes
Total   c. 60 minutes

Suggestions for procedure

Section A   *Roles and functions*

Participants may want 5 minutes or so just to mull over the categories, and in particular to reflect on the twelve functions listed here. Some participants, at this stage, may want to modify the categories provided in the Task. This is quite acceptable.

In small groups of three or four, participants match the roles to the functions by putting one or more letters to a number (see **Example**) and record this on an OHP transparency or large sheet of paper to show to the whole group subsequently. They also justify each choice they make.

Section B   *Alternative ways of classifying roles*

Participants can work on this in small groups (the trainer may want to give a time limit of 5 minutes).

The trainer can elicit the additional 'roles' brainstormed by the groups, write them on the board and provide a few minutes for any participants to comment on suggestions made by other groups.

It is possible that some groups may prefer to work with the four-fold list of roles given here. This is acceptable.

Section C   *Roles and lesson activities*

First alternative (lesson plan):
Participants can work on this in the same small groups. The trainer may want to give participants half a minute or so to read the instructions and then ask if they need further clarification.

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5 The teacher

Notes

He may want to point out that in some cases the teacher is playing a dual or multiple role.

OHP transparencies, posters or re-constitution of groups can be used for participants to learn what conclusions were reached in other small groups and to comment on this.

Second alternative (video):
(Where video facilities are available and part of a lesson can be recorded, this option is to be preferred.)
1 Participants can individually record the changes of role which occur in the section of the lesson they watch.
2 In small groups they can then compare their conclusions with those of other participants.
3 In a plenary group, an appointed member of each small group can be invited simply to describe and account for any particular differences which arose during the small-group discussion.

General discussion and possible outcomes

Some of the realisations that participants may arrive at through this Task are:
– The extent to which a teacher is involved in roles other than that of 'provider'.
– The extent to which a teacher 'provides' more than just examples of new language.
– The amount of time spent by teachers in lessons on 'management'.
– The virtue of staying with a small number of categories to analyse a topic (groups who produce a long list of categories to describe roles may find that this is unwieldy in practice).

Section A Roles and functions

The precise results of the matching exercise will inevitably vary from group to group, reflecting not only differences in teaching circumstances, but also reflecting differing assumptions about what is appropriate in any situation and differing interpretations of some of the terms.

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Notes

The following combinations or 'matchings' are merely one person's individual response. This is not intended as an 'answer sheet':

i)   a   vii) c
ii) b (c, d)   viii) c
iii) c   ix)   c (b, d)
iv) b (d)   x)   d
v)   a   xi)   b (d)
vi) d   xii) b, c (a, d)

Section B   *Alternative ways of classifying roles*

Although it is impossible to anticipate the full variety of categories the groups may produce, some of the following are likely to be included:
friend, judge, disciplinarian, police officer, facilitator, listener, counsellor, helper, monitor, leader, etc.

Section C   *Roles and lesson activities*

First alternative (lesson plan):
The roles performed at the different stages of the lesson by the teacher who wrote Lesson Plan B are debatable, and this debate is to be encouraged. In particular, participants can be encouraged not only to justify their choices but also to refer explicitly to how they themselves would approach a particular activity in the plan, and to compare this with each other.

As participants will be using their own taxonomies, it is not possible to predict the precise outcome. The following is one possible example of how the exercise might be completed using an unmodified taxonomy – (a) diagnostician; (b) planner; (c) manager; (d) provider:

1 c	7 d, a	12 a, b, c, d
2 c	8 c, a, d	13 a, b, c, d
3 c	9 c	14 c
4 c	10 a	15 a, c, d
5 a, c	11 c	16 c
6 d		

Second alternative (video):
The outcome of this will obviously depend on choices made with regard to the video extract.