# CELTA Assignment Three:
# Lessons from the Classroom

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1<sup>st</sup> January 2008

# Observed Lessons

|  | **1** | **2** | **3** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Type** | Skill (Speaking) | Skills (Listening) | Skills (Listening) |
| **Level** | Intermediate | Pre-Intermediate | Intermediate |
| **Materials** | None | Handouts / Textbook | Tape / Whiteboard |
| **Topic Area** | Interviewing famous people; asking questions about life history. | Optimism/Pessimism and Opposites | Travel – trains, planes and cars; road safety. |
| **No. Students** | 5 | 9 | 12 |
| **Date** | 2008-01 11:15 – 12:45 | 2008-01 11:15 – 12:45 | 2008-01-30 11:15 – 12:45 |

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Observed Lessons

### Lesson One

The focus of this lesson was a pre-arranged task: each student took the role of a celebrity, who was then interviewed. The other students played the role of interviewer. The exercise was framed as a television programme.

**Strengths**

The teacher's style was very dramatic, both in the introduction to the lesson and in the exercise itself. The style seemed to work well at drawing out the shyer members of the group. Humour was used extensively, with small discussions on aspects of British humour and its cultural importance.

**Weaknesses**

While the students in the observed group responded well to this style, I imagine that it could easily intimidate students from certain cultures and with certain personalities and as such should be treated carefully. Not all students would respond well to the pressure situation of "acting" in front of the entire class.

**Specific Techniques**

The interview task was an interesting idea for intermediate level students. Each student had the chance to practise both sides of questions, with a focus on fluency in responses. This would certainly be useful for real-world interview situations, and having practice of this in a "safe" environment would be of great help.

### Lesson Two

The lesson focused on optimism and pessimism, leading on to opposites of verbs. The class began with a brief test on some previous vocabulary, then led through a listening task related to optimism and pessimism.

**Strengths**

The teacher had a good rapport with the student group, which allowed for easy student interaction and classroom management. Monitoring was very well handled, appearing more as interaction between the teacher and many individual students, rather than the students as a group.

**Weaknesses**

The feedback in the lesson was perhaps too much centred on individual students, and avoided group feedback to an extent. This worked well in some aspects of the lesson, but in others felt lacking.

**Specific Techniques**

Students matching opposite forms of words is a relatively simple activity that caused good student interaction. Having them further classified, such as into "optimist" and "pessimist", seemed a good way of extending the concept. Beyond that, most techniques used in the lesson were quite standard.

# Lesson Three

Lesson three was focused on various forms of travel, and worked towards a listening task related to road safety. The lesson was very smooth throughout, characterised by a very natural flow from one task to the next throughout.

### Strengths

A very positive aspect of the lesson was the feedback, which was conducted in a very natural fashion that encouraged a small level of competition between students while allowing for effective student↔student error correction. In particular, the teacher very deftly managed guiding students to talk to each other to discuss and correct errors.

### Weaknesses

I would not highlight any particular weaknesses in this lesson. The style of eliciting was very student-based, as a group activity to produce lists of words on a specific topic. In the feedback stage these were written directly onto the board, which did not make use of concept-checking questions to a great extent. If anything this could leave some students confused as to the meaning of certain words.

### Specific Techniques

In order to brainstorm vocabulary words related to transport, the teacher split the class into three groups: "plane", "train" and "car". Each group had to produce as many words as possible *specific* to their mode of transport. These were discussed as part of the feedback stage. I found this a very effective method of eliciting vocabulary by use of mild competition. The students enjoyed it, and I would definitely attempt to employ this method when eliciting topic-related vocabulary.

# Personal Strengths and Weaknesses

From the feedback of tutors and other students in teaching practice, I would highlight two major areas that I would like to improve in my own teaching, and some areas with which I am pleased.

# Strengths

I am relatively happy with my interaction with students, and my manner in the classroom. I think that students respond well to my use of body language and non-verbal cues. I make a point of attempting to be sensitive to problems that individual students have in class.

I am relatively happy with my grasp of grammar and phonology, and feel that I have sufficiently grasped the rules to be able to pass them on. I enjoy language and learning about it, and feel that this will help me develop as an EFL teacher in the future.

# Weaknesses

### Appropriate Use of Language

If a lesson deviates too far from the lesson plan, or in certain other situations, I have a tendency to revert to more complex language, which can be confusing for students. This is particularly true of students at the elementary level, who are more likely to misunderstand instructions and thus cause me to have to rephrase myself.

A secondary aspect to this is that I occasionally find it difficult to express concepts "naturally" in simple language. More preparation and practice on the specifics of how to clearly and simply give instructions in lesson situations would help this problem.

**Contextualising**

In several lessons, I have overlooked the need to contextualise language. This is particularly relevant in grammar points. My own learning style is to prefer abstract rules without the use of a context.

In some situations, this problem occurs by my simply neglecting to provide any context whatsoever. In other situations, I have a tendency to rely on a single object rather than using real-life examples. A notable case of this was in presenting the structures: "there is"; "there are"; "there isn't"; "there aren't"; "is there?" and "are there?" entirely with the use of a pen. In such a case, students can become confused due to the lack of a genuine usage on which to rely.

# Future Development

The most effective method of improving as a teacher will clearly be to practice the skills that have been taught on the CELTA course. I intend to spend several years teaching in the immediate future, either as an EFL teacher or as an academic in a foreign country. In either of these situations, there are techniques that I have learned that will be of great use, although clearly EFL teaching will give me direct experience of all aspects of the CELTA course.

In particular, it would be of use for me to focus strongly on my teaching of elementary level classes, which allows me less scope to rely on complex language, and ensures that instructions and descriptions are conducted in simple language.

A secondary aid to my EFL teaching, will be personal study in linguistics. I intend to continue learning Chinese, as well as continuing to practice French and Spanish. I have an interest in the underlying features of other languages and the cultures in which they exist, and this will allow me to more effectively tailor my teaching style to learners from those cultures.

I already own Swan's "Practical English Usage", and will continue to study it whenever I notice relevant language points in conversation or teaching. Additionally, I intend to make use of the extensive EFL resources available on the Internet. These take the form both of resource websites such as [2], and teacher's interactive forums such as [3]. I will also invest in at least one EFL textbook, such as [4], which is supported by online resources.

**References**

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2. Sperling, D., 'Dave's ESL Café.' Available: http://www.eslcafe.com/
3. ESL Base, 2008. Available: http://www.eslbase.com/
4. Englishpage.com, 2008. 'Englishpage.com - Free online English lessons & ESL / EFL resources.' Available: http://www.englishpage.com [2008]
5. Swan & Smith, 'Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems', Cambridge University Press, 2007.
6. le Maistre, S and Lewis, C., 'Language to go – Elementary', Longman, 2005.