

Delta Module 2

Reflection and Action

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Part 1

1. Beliefs and practices

My initial start as a teacher was on the grammar syllabus. (This was from both my own experiences as a high school student, and in my first job teaching in the public schools in Japan.)

However, over the years I have become sympathetic to the input approach. This is for the following reasons:

- I've come to the conclusion that language has too many features to be studied consciously.
- I've realized that many students don't enjoy studying grammar, but they enjoy reading and listening to stories. I believe that students' enjoyment of the language affects their motivation, which will affect their long term achievement.
- I myself find "Story Time" is my favorite part of the lesson. I love it when I can see students getting absorbed in the story.
- I've been influenced by reading books and watching Youtube lectures by Stephen Krashen. I find his arguments persuasive.

All that being said, my understanding of the research (*How Languages are Learned* by Lightbown and Spada) is that many language features cannot be learned by input alone. Also, my students expect to study grammar.

I therefore have come to believe that grammar lessons are useful, but that they should be a clarification of grammar the students have already been exposed to in the input, and not an introduction of new language. In an ideal situation, I like Dave Willis's idea of teaching grammar by using sentences the students had already processed for meaning in previous lessons.

2. Strengths and weaknesses

I've spent much of the past 6 years focused on finding and creating appropriate input lessons and stories for my students. I'm very proud of the archive of material that I've built up, but I'm worried that in this time I haven't developed other aspects of my teaching.

I've also probably spent too much time in private language schools where I was primarily evaluated on how much fun the students were having. As a result, I've gotten very good at gamifying grammar points. (I now have a large repertoire of games). But I've not been focused on ensuring students understand them.

On a related point, I've also gotten sloppy on my timing, because I'd often let certain activities run long if the students were enjoying them.

My main weakness is pronunciation. I think I have a bad ear for this myself, so I have trouble with the vowels on the phonemic chart, identifying intonation patterns, and identifying sentence stress. I've also never really developed the confidence of leading drills in the classroom.

A strength is correction. This started when I got to Vietnam, and my adult students complained that I wasn't correcting them enough. As a result, I started being very vigilant about correcting them. I've now got into the habit of looking for, and responding to, pronunciation and grammar errors.

However a weakness is highlighting good learner language. I was trained to do this in the CELTA, but I've gotten out of the habit of doing so.

3. Action plan

Weakness	Action Points	Ways of collecting Evidence
phonemic chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Re-read chapters 2 and 3 of Sound Foundations by Adrian Underhill by the end of next week. * Memorize the vowel part of the phonemic chart * Re-watch Adrian Underhill's Youtube lesson on the Phonemic Chart * Attempt to teach a lesson on the phonemic chart for one of the upcoming unassessed lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Test myself on writing out the phonemic chart, and comparing it to Underhill's version * Evaluate the effectiveness of my unassessed lesson.
Moving toward Meaning Focus Practice on Grammar Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * By the end of next month, read "How to Teach Grammar" by Scott Thornbury. (In this case, the whole book looks useful to my purpose.) * Plan an unassessed lesson based on what I've learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Write up a summary of what I've learned from the book * Evaluate the success of the lesson based on students' reports
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * In my weekly peer observations, note down the timing of other teachers * Be stricter with myself in my unassessed lessons. Push myself to keep to a tight time limit. * Attempt to make the first half of my lessons quicker in order to focus more time on the production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ask peers to evaluate me based on timing * Tutor's report for LSA 1&2.
Diversifying My Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Up to now, I've been teaching mostly input lesson supplemented by some grammar or lexis focus on form. I would like to try to develop the skills to teach a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The skills lessons for the LSAs should help me on this. * I plan to continue to try to diversify my teaching once I return to my regular job in

	<p>wide range of lessons. Learn how to teach well-staged speaking, writing, reading and listening lessons.</p> <p>* Finish reading “Teaching Speaking” by Christine C.M. Goh and Anne Burns by the end of next month</p>	<p>December. This will be an ongoing aim of mine.</p> <p>* Write a summary of what I’ve learned from “Teaching Speaking”</p>
<p>Highlighting Good Language Use from Students</p>	<p>* In the next few lessons, try to make sure I take care to always highlight good language use from students as well as mistakes</p>	<p>* Tutor’s reports for LSA 1&2.</p> <p>* Ask a peer to observe me on highlighting good learner language</p>

Part 2: Word Count: 640

Commenting on Action Plans

Limited space here prevents me from giving a detailed report on everything I did and did not do in relation to the 5 goals mentioned above. To summarize:

- * I neglected to collect peer-reports on any of the goals. I think this was primarily due to not having prepared evidence collecting forms in advance, which made it much easier for these requests to slip my mind during the actual lesson. I will make up questionnaire forms for LSA 3 to make sure that this does not happen again.
- * I improved on my timing in LSA 2, but not in LSA 1 (evidence: tutor's feedback). In LSA 2, I had more time for production at the end, but the problem was that I had made this extra time by moving through my lesson plan timings quicker. I was advised by the tutor to have more realistic timings on the lesson plan.
- * I have also been keeping track of timings in my peer-observations, and noting when peers leave adequate time for production.
 - * I was not able to do a lesson on the phonemic chart, because my classmate already did the lesson with the students.
- * I did, however, re-watch Adrian Underhill's Youtube video, and made an effort to re-familiarize myself with the Phonemic chart.
- * I have not read any of the books I had planned to, because I do not currently have access to good copies, so this goal will have to be postponed until after the course finishes.
- * I believe I have been making an effort to give positive language feedback to students, although this was not mentioned in tutor feedback (perhaps because it is assumed at this level).
- * I have varied my teaching technique with the experimental lesson on Story-Listening. I tried out more student centred techniques in LSA 1, although LSA 2 was largely a return to my usual habits.

Current Weaknesses

Based on the tutor feedback from LSA 1&2, current weaknesses are:

- * Creating an appropriate level of challenge (particularly with the elementary learners) (Feedback from LSA 2)
- * Not fully exploiting materials in the lessons (Feedback from LSA 1 & 2).
- * Too teacher-centred and not enough learner-centred activities (Feedback from LSA 2)
- * Accurate Timing in Lesson Plan (Feedback from LSA 2)

There are points that were not present in part 1 of this reflection. I think part of this is due to the transition to lower-level learners. I think I have always tended to under-estimate the lower-level students, and in my teaching practice have always worried about challenging them too much. I had not thought about it before this course, but perhaps I have not been challenging my lower-level learners enough. I will work on creating more challenging lessons in my last two lessons. Being overly teacher centred perhaps also relates to my fear of giving the lower-levels any challenge—I make the lessons teacher centred because I want to carefully guide them through the language points.

New Action Plan

Weakness	Action Points	Ways of collecting Evidence
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appropriate level of challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * In LSA 3 and 4, attempt to push learners beyond what they are comfortable doing * In LSA 3, present learners with more advanced texts, and try to resist guiding them through every point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tutor Feedback * Peer reports for LSA 3 (see sample in appendices)
Accurate Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Be more precise in my timings for LSA 3 and 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tutor Feedback
Fully Exploit Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use reading text for LSA 3. Push learners to notice many of the language features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tutor Feedback * Peer reports for LSA 3
Learner Centred Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decrease teacher talking time in LSA 3 and 4. * Use more guided discoveries in LSA 3 and 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tutor Feedback * Peer reports for LSA 3

Part 3 Word Count 705

Reflection on Developments

After I finished the final lesson, I was somewhat frustrated with myself over how many of my initial weak points remained weak points. I still had trouble managing the timing. I still over-planned. I still had trouble as a result of not scripting instructions and ICQs. I still didn't leave enough adequate time for production. After I finished the lesson, I knew immediately what I had done wrong, and recognized that these were weak points I had resolved to improve. I think at least part of the problem was the pressure of the final evaluation. Because the last one is the most important, I think I let the pressure get to my head, and didn't think straight. I went back to my old habits of over-planning to try to ensure that everything would be covered in the lesson. I had the beginning of the lesson carefully scripted, but couldn't focus enough to script my instructions all the way through the lesson. On the plus side, I was much better on the 4th lesson about keeping all the activities learner centred, and at keeping a high level of challenge.

Looking back at the first part of this assignment, it strikes me that perhaps I over-stated the permanency of my beliefs. In actuality, my beliefs are constantly fluctuating, depending on the last lesson I've had, or the last book I read. A Scott Thornbury Youtube video I watched last week, "*Fossilization: Is It Terminal, Doctor?*" (2014) has caused me to be more sceptical of Krashen's theories. But I could easily be brought around again by the next video/book I encounter. Also, after my experimental lesson with Story-Listening, I found myself questioning if this is really the best use of class-time for these students, or if these kind of stories would work better as reading/listening homework.

Evaluation of Action Plan

Timing unfortunately was still a problem in LSA 3 and 4 (source: tutor reports and self-evaluation). Level of challenge was also a problem in LSA 3 (tutor report), although this was linked to timing. (There was a more challenging reading in the plan that we didn't have time for.) I think I had a good level of challenge for LSA 4.

Learner centred activities were a strong point in LSA 3 and 4 (source: tutor reports and self-evaluation).

Fully exploiting materials was mixed. In both LSA 3 and 4, learners spent a lot of time analysing the model text, but they were looking for only one language feature. (Again, this is linked to timing. There wasn't enough time in the lesson to look at texts in greater detail.)

Future Actions

When I return to my regular work environment next week, I would like to continue working on my timing, and leaving more room for meaningful productive practice at the end of the lesson. As I mentioned in part 1, this is something I have gotten sloppy on over the years because I tend to let the controlled practices run long if the students are enjoying them. I had hoped to improve on this the past couple weeks, but unfortunately I hadn't improved as much as I wanted to. But it will be something I'll continue to work on.

Keeping the level of challenge high, especially for elementary classes, will be another thing I'm going to try to keep focusing on once I return to my regular job. Also, once I return to my regular working context, I'll have access to print books again, and can read the books I intended to read in part 1: "Teaching Speaking" by Christine C.M. Goh and Anne Burns and "How to Teach Grammar" by Scott Thornbury. I will also try to put ideas from these books into practice. The first book I will use to designing more lessons that work on speaking subskills (as opposed to what I

used to do, which is just give students a topic to speak about, and then give them feedback on grammar errors). The second book I will try to use to design more lessons around grammar that have a meaningful context (as opposed to what I have been doing too often, which is just to design gap-fill games around the grammar point).

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Appendix:

Data Collection form for Peer Observers

- How was the level of challenge for the learners? Were they slightly challenged without the difficulty becoming too overwhelming for them? Please comment if the challenge was too easy or too difficult for this group.
- How well were the materials exploited in this lesson? Did the teacher get all the challenge that he could out of the materials used in class?
- What percentage of the class was learner-centred? What percentage was teacher-centred? How could this lesson have been made more learner-centred?