

Revisiting teacher language proficiency and the native speaker

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**Future of English Language
Teaching Conference** **ONLINE**



Tell us

If someone asked you to describe what you do when you say you ‘teach English through English’, what would you say?

Outline

- Teacher language proficiency
 - Background
 - Definitions
- Classroom language skills
- Teaching ideas:
 - Content
 - Assessment
- Future of English Language Teaching

Teacher language proficiency

- Some background:
 - Teacher language proficiency is not general language proficiency (Freeman et al 2015)
 - Variety of ESP
 - Specific language, skills and genres in a workplace setting
 - Language skills required to prepare and teach lessons
 - Specialised set of skills

Why is it important?

- Necessary condition for effective teaching
 - Teaching English through the medium of English
- Ability to teach in English
 - Influenced by the individual's language proficiency (Cullen 2002, Mitchell 1988, Richards 2017)
 - Impacts:
 - Essential teaching procedures
 - Authority in the classroom
 - Self-confidence
 - Ability to improvise / adjust
 - Interactive skills

And yet ...

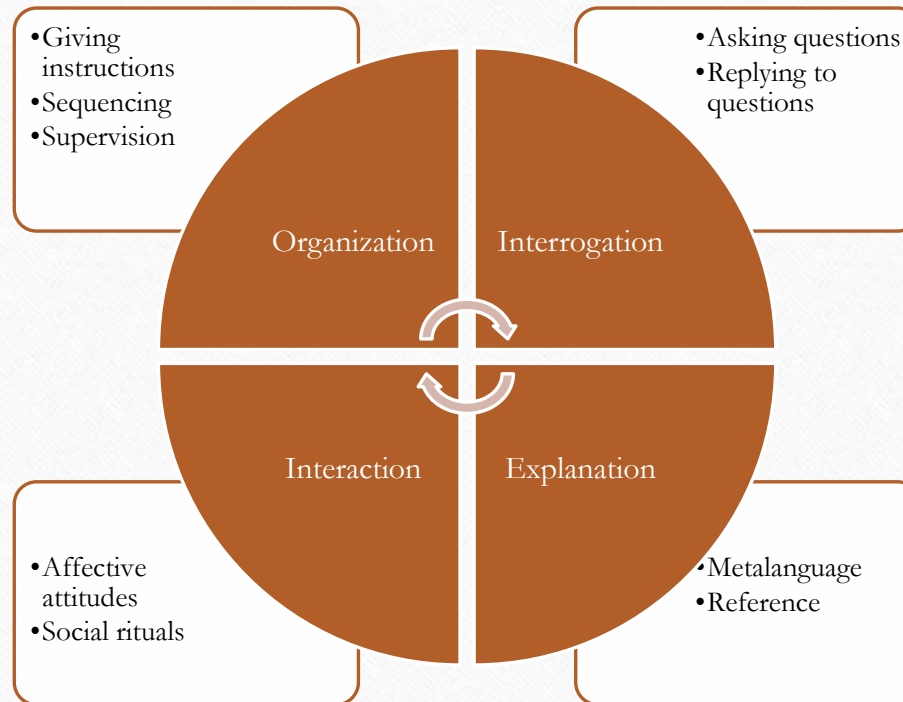
- Key initial qualifications
 - Require English competence – minimum C1 on the CEFR
 - Do not have a specific *language for teaching* component
 - Focus on:
 - Content knowledge
 - Pedagogical knowledge and ability
 - Assessment:
 - Teaching competence
 - Language awareness

Question for you

- Name a module in your previous teacher training that developed your language & communication skills for the classroom.
- If you did not have a 'language for teaching' course, how did you develop your classroom communication skills?

What is 'classroom language'?

Hughes 1981



Is this ...

- Discourse analysis?
 - No, not really but ...
 - Example: *IRF – Initiate-response-follow-up*
- Classroom management?
 - No.
 - It is using language to achieve or do things in the classroom.
 - May or may not be related to classroom management.

A course in classroom language skills

- Is not a course in teacher talk, it is more than that
 - **cf.: Classroom Interactional Competence** (CIC) is defined as, '*Teachers' and learners' ability to use **interaction** as a tool for mediating and assisting learning*' (Walsh 2011, p: 158).
- Is not simply an analysis of communication in the classroom
- Is a language competency course
 - Like any other ESP course:
 - English for Peacekeepers, English for Aviation, English for Academic Study
 - Helps teachers develop as mediators of language

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Language proficiency is key to a teacher's ability to teach
in a second or foreign language

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Teacher expertise is comprised of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge
and ability *and discourse skills*.

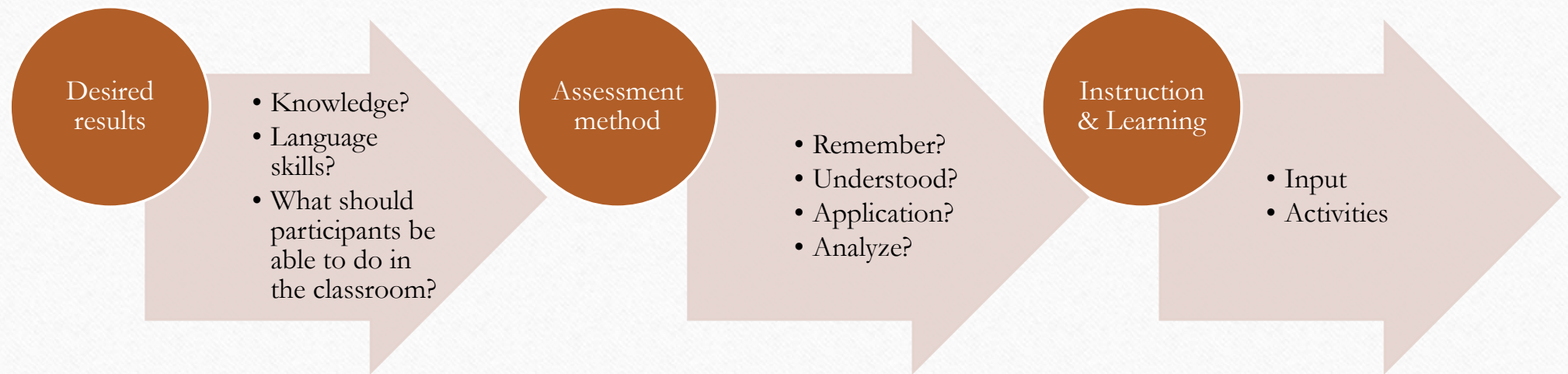
(Richards 2017)

And the native speaker?

- Communication skills need to be learnt
 - Doing things with words
- More NNEST than NEST

How can such a course be designed?

- Instructional design:
 - Backward design



Desired results

- Aligned with:
 - Overall degree program goals
 - Occupational language needs

Assessment method

- Demonstrate that the content has been understood and can be transferred beyond the classroom

Instruction & learning

- Content is relevant
- Activities and tasks are aligned with the desired results of the program and course

What are the desired results?

- Be able to:
 - Use English effectively and confidently as a means of:
 - *Instruction*
 - *Class organisation*
 - *Communication with their own students as individuals*
- Will know:
 - How to apply different language forms for different language functions
 - The importance of intonation and prosody in classroom discourse

Desired results(cont.)

- Will be skilled at:
 - Modifying language to their learners' abilities
 - Using language in the following functions:
 - *Organization*
 - *Interrogation*
 - *Explanation*
 - *Interaction*

Assessment - traditional

- Language as the means to an end
 - Lesson plan
 - Teaching practice
 - Reflective journals
 - Traditional qualifications
 - Focus on pedagogical and content knowledge

Assessment – backward design

- Have the students understood the material enough to transfer the knowledge outside of the classroom?
- Criteria for assessment
 - Evaluative criteria
 - Apply the knowledge gained in this course to their own classroom practice
 - Explain language choices made
 - Modify language as fits the communicative situation ...
 - Assessment evidence
 - How can they demonstrate that their knowledge?

Instruction & Learning

Tasks & Activities

Focus on Language

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation & fluency

Focus on Skill

- Instructing
- Explaining tasks and activities
- Giving feedback

Tasks

Essential questions
(McTighe & Wiggins 2013)

- Guided through the use of *essential questions*:
 - Open-ended
 - Thought-provoking & intellectually engaging
 - Higher-order thinking
 - Important & transferable ideas
 - Additional questions
 - Support & justification
 - Recurring

Developing language skills for the classroom

- Focus on activity types / routines
 - A set of procedures that have been established
 - Essential to classroom survival (Tsui 2003)
 - Willis (1981): Checking attendance, Control & discipline, ending the lesson or a stage in the lesson
 - Hughes, Moate & Raatikainen (2007): Involving the learners, working with the textbook, using technology



Over to you!

What are some routine activities in the classroom? Name at least 3!

What does this mean for teacher training & education?

- All aspects of teaching is conducted through the use of language.
 - Eg. *Presenting grammar, developing reading skills, creating worksheets, improving the classroom environment ...*
- Practical language / communication skills should be included in curriculum
 - Classroom communication skills should not be taken for granted:
 - NNEST & NEST both need to learn how to use language effectively in their classrooms
 - Content knowledge and use of methodologies are ineffective if ...
 - The teacher/ educator is unable to communicate effectively

Future of English Language Teaching

- There will be more non-native English speaking teachers than native English speaking teachers.
- Teaching syllabi & programmes need to adapt to this changing demographic.
- All aspects of teaching need to include a practical language component:
 - Possible solution:
 - Backward design

References

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We argue for a reconceptualization of teacher language proficiency, not as general English proficiency but as a specialized subset of skills required to prepare and teach lessons.

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Freeman et al, 2015

Thank you for listening!

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