8 Facilitation in language teaching

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In this chapter we will focus on the ideas and practices of Facilitation from two points of view. First we will look at the gradual emergence of Facilitation in language teaching as something different and distinct from Lecturing and Teaching, and then we will look at some practical steps you can take if you wish to explore a more Facilitative approach in your own teaching.

Lecturing, Teaching and Facilitating

Throughout this chapter I use the three terms Lecturer, Teacher and Facilitator (spelt with capital letters) in a specific way to refer to three different kinds of teacher. Clarifying these three special definitions, which cut across conventional use, is what the first half of this chapter is about, and though I may tend to make things sound clearer than they are in reality, I do not suggest that this conceptual framework applies to everyone. There are all sorts of exceptions. I simply propose the following as a useful thinking tool for the time being.

By Lecturer I mean a teacher in any educational context (primary, secondary, tertiary, private, state, general, specialist) who has a knowledge of the topic taught but no special skill or interest in the techniques and methodology of teaching it. The main qualification of the Lecturer is knowledge of the topic, but the procedures and techniques the Lecturer employs to assist learning are not deeply questioned, studied or even valued, nor do they form part of the qualification to be a Lecturer.

By Teacher I mean a teacher in any educational setting who has a knowledge of the topic and is also familiar with a range of methods and procedures for teaching it. This dual focus on topic and method is probably embodied in the teacher preparation and qualification. However the development of significant personal and interpersonal classroom skills and the systematic intention to develop learner self-

direction and self-evaluation are not seriously investigated, nor are they a part of the qualification to be a Teacher.

By Facilitator I mean a teacher in any educational setting who understands the topic, is skilled in the use of current teaching methods and techniques, and who actively studies and pays attention to the psychological learning atmosphere and the inner processes of learning on a moment by moment basis, with the aim of enabling learners to take as much responsibility for their learning as they can. This last is what differentiates the Facilitator from the Teacher. The qualification of the Facilitator is having knowledge and practical expertise in all three of these areas (topic, method and inner processes).

Thus the Teacher adds to the Lecturer repertoire the practical skills and knowledge for working with teaching activities. Similarly the Facilitator adds to the Teacher repertoire the practical skills and sensitivities for managing the intra- and inter-personal experiencing of the group. The Teacher can also do what is expected of a Lecturer, but in a more informed and flexible way, and the Facilitator can also do what is expected of a Lecturer or a Teacher, but in a more informed and flexible way.

It is important to remember that my special terms – Lecturer, Teacher, Facilitator – do not necessarily correspond with the normal use of these terms. It is possible that someone whose job is lecturer, or teacher, may according to my definition be an excellent Facilitator. Conversely, someone who describes themselves as a facilitator, may according to my definition be closer to Teacher or Lecturer. It is also important to bear in mind that each of the three types of teaching that I call Lecturing, or Teaching, or Facilitating is suited to different learning contexts and, moreover, that each can be practised well or badly. Someone who teaches mainly by giving lectures may have an outstanding ability to initiate vivid and successful learning, and someone who calls themselves a facilitator may fail to create an inspiring learning atmosphere.

The change in teaching style from Lecturer to Teacher or Teacher to Facilitator can come about within the development of a single person's teaching career, or more slowly over several generations, or not at all. I can identify with each of the three types (as you probably can too) and I shall therefore write in the first person while I develop these distinctions.

Lecturer

As a Lecturer my main area of expertise is my knowledge of the topic, and this is also my main qualification for teaching. The study of teaching methods has not been part of my preparation, so I rely on a

relatively small range of individual and intuitive techniques that may reflect how I myself was taught. You can infer from the way I teach my underlying assumption that learning is a matter of exposure to the topic, which you will see me providing by transmission, explanation, information, assignments and so on. I may perhaps have an inspiring and imaginative style, but I do not pay much attention to my students' personal involvement; indeed I have no methodology for doing that. I may be aware that there is a field such as methodology, but it does not seem important to me to investigate. So I do not feel I am missing out on anything, nor do I make a connection between the lack of flexibility in my teaching technique and some of the difficulties that arise in my students' learning.

This lack of flexibility makes it difficult for me to respond creatively to my students' own learning needs and styles, and therefore my presentation of the topic, however effective I may feel it to be, may not correspond to the ways my learners need to learn. I don't have a systematic way of checking learning, getting feedback and diagnosing learning difficulties, nor a conceptual framework that encourages me to develop such strategies. However, I don't see this as a problem, nor perhaps do my students, because in my environment no one expects anything different. The 'successful' students in my class are those who are able to find within themselves, or from elsewhere, what they do not get from me.

My professional development consists mostly of extending my knowledge of the topic I teach. This does not of itself improve my ability to teach, though the enthusiasm it generates in me may help my learners; however, it can also cause me to lose touch with my students if I get carried away with my own enthusiasm at the expense of their interests. Such development can be called *horizontal* in that it does not challenge my underlying values and assumptions about how learning takes place nor about how my teaching can affect my students' learning. Being horizontal also implies that such development is somehow an extension of what I already know, and, in a sense, more of the same.

Over a period of time I may be struck by the observation that sometimes my lessons seem to 'go better' and that sometimes I seem more in touch with my students' learning. I may get used to this and assume that the variables governing this fluctuation are 'out there' (i.e. not 'in here') and that this is an unchangeable fact of teaching. On the other hand, my resulting creative dissatisfaction with my teaching, and my curiosity about what else could be possible, may lead me to see that how I teach is itself a field worthy of investigation. I may begin to investigate the field of methodology, if it is accessible to me; and if it isn't, then I may begin to 'invent' methodology and class management

skills by myself or with others who share my interest. If this gains enough momentum, then we have the beginning of a local body of shared methodology, which will contribute to and benefit from other groups elsewhere with similiar questions and interests.

Such development can be called *vertical* in that it represents a kind of quantum jump into a new area of interest rather than an extension of a previous one. In the case of the move from Lecturer to Teacher this vertical development consists of a shift in my underlying values and assumptions towards a greater valuation of the process of learning itself. This is shown by my interest in a more methodical approach to the way I divide up, sequence, present, and provide practice of the topic, and in the way I manage classroom activities and monitor learning. Those who value and systematically pay attention to both the topic they teach and also the methods they use for teaching are, according to my terminology, Teachers.

Teacher

As a Teacher my twin areas of expertise are my knowledge of the subject matter and my skill with the methods and techniques I use to help my students to learn. My preparation probably reflects this double interest, though colleagues in some countries still qualify as Lecturer first and then 'upgrade' to Teacher through in-service work on methodology. Being able to employ a variety of teaching techniques and having a range of class management skills provides me with greater contact with my learners and their learning processes than was available to me as Lecturer. My Lecturer skills are still available to me, though I now have additional options. I have a conceptual framework that opens me to the different choices of activities my learners can do, and to the different consequences that flow from these choices. My methodology comes not only from workshops and training courses but from exchange with colleagues, from teacher methodology books and articles, from my own experience and experiments. I 're-invent' what I get from others to suit my own situation and my preferences of style.

My professional development as a Teacher consists of further exploration of both the topic and the methodology as it relates to my own teaching situation. I may take an interest in the cascade of methodological materials that come on the market. Such development is *horizontal* in that it does not usually require me to extend my underlying values and assumptions beyond the Teacher paradigm. Being horizontal, this development is somehow more of the same, even if it is a refinement. However, although methodology has helped me as Teacher to make

progress with some of the problems that I faced as Lecturer, it has also brought me closer to other problems that were invisible to me as Lecturer but which now become visible.

Some of these new problems are to do with the subjective experiencings of learners and teachers in relation to themselves, to each other, and to their learning, and with processes such as engagement in what we do and having access to making the decisions that matter. For example: 'Good' lessons are still elusive and unpredictable, and even when they do occur, they seem not to be repeatable. They cannot be caught and released again later. Compared with myself as Lecturer, I have a sharper sense of what constitutes a 'good' lesson for me, and a corresponding sharper disappointment when such lessons don't happen. I become aware that the psychological atmosphere of my class does not have the quality of relationship that I want and that I recognise as 'happening' in my 'good' lessons. Lessons planned well don't always turn out well, and unplanned lessons are sometimes the highlight of the week. The cause and effect of good teaching seems both beckoning and elusive. I am frustrated by my apparent inability to affect the motivation of some of my students, among whom there is resistance and boredom that I cannot fathom. I begin to value rapport but do not really understand how to create it. Teaching has brought me closer to all these questions than did Lecturing, and the questions disturb me more. For a long time I may seek answers through the horizontal development of new course books and techniques, but methodology that enabled me to move from Lecturer to Teacher and whetted my thirst for what might be possible in learning does not have answers to these new sets of questions.

I come to realise that the way I am has as much effect on the class as the methods I use, and that patience, relationship, spontaneity, empathy, respect and so forth, are qualities that are of the utmost importance, yet cannot be put in place by more methodology or a different course book. At this point in my development I may do what many Teachers do, that is to freeze myself into this state of affairs by convincing myself that good teachers are born and not made. On the other hand, I may conclude that good teachers can make themselves if they have the will to find out how, and this brings me up against a second quantum shift in values and assumptions that can allow me to take my search in a new direction, and to find a new ally. This is the *vertical* development for the Teacher, since it leads out of the Teacher paradigm by questioning the values and assumptions that drive my work.

If my creative dissatisfaction is sufficient, I will invent or gain access to a significant, systematic and workable way of affecting these impor-

tant variables that are bubbling away below the surface of my class and whose energy I have so far been unable to tap. The Teacher who becomes a serious student of this new field can be called a Facilitator; but, though Facilitation can be talked about in a way that was not possible twenty (even ten) years ago, it is still not a generally accepted part of pre-service teacher preparation or in-service training. Therefore Facilitators in language teaching are still pioneers working alone or through networks without 'official blessing'.

Facilitator

As a Facilitator my triple area of expertise consists of my knowledge of the subject matter, my skilful use of teaching methods, and my developing capacity to generate a psychological climate conducive to high quality learning. My enlarged equation connecting people and learning embraces the psychological learning atmosphere itself, which in turn contains all the work we do on language and all the learning techniques we use. This new equation includes the relationships in and between people in the group, the degree of security felt by individuals, the sensitivity of the trainer to undercurrents, the quality of listening and acceptance, the possibility for nonjudgemental interaction, the way the needs for self-esteem are met, and so on. It also includes the issue of power, that is who makes the decisions, how, and about what and who carries them out.

Things are by no means easier, but as there is a wider field of vision, there is a greater chance of recognising problems which are to do with personal and interpersonal skills and linking them to their causes. Some of the 'people processes' that were invisible to me as Teacher become visible to me as Facilitator, just as some of the 'methodological processes' that were invisible to me as Lecturer became visible to me as Teacher. My *horizontal* development as Facilitator consists in my study of some of the approaches to Facilitation that are increasingly available these days, mostly imported from outside mainstream ELT and outside general school education. However, ELT interest groups and networks are re-inventing this imported material, restructuring it for ELT contexts and making it ever more available to Teachers as indicated by the increase in books, articles and courses. These initiatives are characteristically individual, local, and 'bottom up' (i.e. not officially initiated), and, like methodology, may in the future become institutionalised as part of official qualifications.

At this transitional stage, writers and practitioners typically view the Facilitator landscape through the filtering lens of Teacher or even Lecturer attitudes, values and experiences. (Just as the movements of new planets were first tracked and explained by observers who believed Earth was at the centre of the solar system.) One example of this is the contemporary attempt to move towards greater learner autonomy, which is sometimes implemented with values and attitudes regarding the use and sharing of power that belong to the Teacher rather than the Facilitator paradigm. The method is driven by the wrong attitude and the initiative hits difficulties. To put it another way, what should be a vertical development (involving the development of new attitudes to drive new behaviours, both belonging to the Facilitator paradigm) is reduced to a horizontal development (the new behaviours from the Facilitator paradigm are seen as being on the same level as behaviours from the Teacher paradigm, therefore capable of being driven by Teacher attitudes) and so the initiative, starved of the attitudes and values that nourish it, fades away.

Though the superficial copying of techniques that belong to the next level doesn't work, it is nevertheless widespread and probably inevitable. In the last two decades Facilitative techniques have, perhaps because of their exotic nature or the promise of something different, been written about, demonstrated and copied, but often without the attitudes that are necessary to make them work. The effect of this has been to reduce the new to the old, to reduce a vertical development to a horizontal development, to copy the technique and miss the insight.

Here are a couple of examples of Teacher copying a Facilitative technique: (1) The Teacher uses an activity that requires a degree of self-disclosure by the participants, but the atmosphere is not sufficiently supportive nor is the level of trust sufficiently high to enable the activity to run. The activity either grinds to a halt or redirects itself along a safer path that may lead nowhere. (2) The Teacher forces the students to decide for themselves (Humanistic tyranny!), or leaves them to self-direct when they aren't ready to (Abdication).

To complete the picture here are a couple of examples of Lecturer copying a Teaching technique: (1) The Lecturer, in his attempt not to Lecture or 'tell', over-compensates and tries to elicit what isn't there, missing the opportunity to give just what is needed. (2) The Lecturer sabotages her own attempts to set up group work by her unconscious conviction that it would be much better if she simply told them, and by her reluctance to leave centre-stage.

The point of all this is that new techniques with old attitudes may amount to no change, while new attitudes even with old techniques can lead to significant change. From the outside Teaching and Facilitating appear to be driven by different techniques, but from the inside they are driven by different attitudes, intentions and experiences.

Individuals are always pioneering the thresholds between Lecturer and Teacher and between Teacher and Facilitator and they face all the difficulties that pioneers usually face. But the quantum jump to a wider acceptability occurs only when a critical mass of teachers, researchers, authors, etc. put the new area firmly on the map on behalf of the profession. This has happened and is happening in many places for methodology at the Teacher level, but has not happened yet at the Facilitator level of people processes. However, I foresee a considerable increase in this area of activity over the next couple of decades.

There are aspects of this Lecturer – Teacher – Facilitator framework that need to be questioned; nevertheless I propose it as a useful thinking tool, and I offer it for discussion and for improvement. Within the framework of the main issue, which does not in fact depend on the validity of the framework itself, is the view I have proposed of the Facilitator, and in the remainder of the chapter we will focus on a few practical aspects of Facilitation.

Practical steps towards Facilitation

Facilitation is holistic. This means that everything counts: all aspects of the Facilitator's presence including feelings, attitudes, thoughts, physical presence, movements, quality of attention, degree of openness and so on, have an effect on the learning atmosphere and on what possibilities within each group member are opened or closed at any moment. What follows are some invitations to experiment and explore these areas in simple and subtle ways in order to help you get to know some current and typical ways of working at the Facilitator level. I have found them helpful.

If you decide you'd like to work with them, here are a few suggestions:

– Approach these questions with the open spirit of an adventurer and explorer and try to greet discoveries with delight and curiosity.
– Choose a single question or experiment and try it out during your usual class teaching. Observe or witness yourself while teaching, perhaps by building reminders into your lesson plan.
– Try a question for a few days but leave it before it loses its freshness, and try another, then return to a previous experiment and so on.
– Though the questions look simple, you'll find as you work with them that they gradually deepen and reveal more and more about how you interact with yourself and with your students.
– Discussion with a colleague who is trying the same thing may help

clarify your experience, and recording your observations may help you discern your patterns.
– Reflection and discussion which is not based on concrete self-observation in the heat of the moment will leave the questions cold and incapable of catalysing insight. In other words be wary of too much theory talk.
– At all times be especially interested in the discrepancies you will certainly find between the effect you think you have and the effect you actually have.
– The process of becoming conscious of previously habitual ways of doing things can feel strange initially, but it is the first step in turning habits into choices, which seems to me an excellent approach to teacher development.

1 The way you listen

1.1 From time to time during lessons try to catch yourself in the act of listening to a student, and notice *how* you listen. Don't change your listening, just notice what you do and how you do it. What else takes your attention apart from the person speaking? What else goes on in you that distracts your attention away from the person you are listening to?

1.2 Can you, while listening to a student, very simply deepen the attention you pay, in a supportive and respectful way? Nothing need look different on the outside, the movement being entirely within. What is that movement? And what is necessary for it to take place? To pay attention in this way does not require agreeing with the person, it simply means listening accurately both to the words and to the person behind the words.

1.3 As you get a little accustomed to 'noticing the quality of your own listening', can you sometimes notice small judgements, or irritations or impatiences that seem to creep in from nowhere? For example, finding yourself silently disapproving of his pronunciation, or of her not having done her homework, or of his getting the answer wrong, or wishing she would hurry up and be correct. Can you catch yourself (very subtly) wishing a student was a bit different from the way he is?

1.4 Do you notice occasions when you feel you listen well? How do you know that? Do you notice that the quality of your listening can sometimes affect the quality of the speaker's speaking? What makes this possible? Maybe outer conditions (such as the location, noise, time of day) contribute, but you can also listen well when outer conditions are not so favourable.

2 *The way you speak*

2.1 Having made a provisional study of the way you listen to students, can you begin to notice more about the way you speak to your class? (I find this a more difficult and more advanced exercise of attention.) Start by noticing your words. Do you say more than you need? Do you repeat yourself? Can you be succinct? Try to notice this at the moment you do it, not just in retrospect. Never mind all that is said about teacher talking time, we are referring here to teacher talking quality.

2.2 For a few days notice features of your speech other than your words. For example, observe the tone of your voice, including intonation, timbre, softness, harshness. Notice the volume at which you speak, and also how fast you typically speak. What causes this? How do the tone, volume and speed compare with the way you speak in the staffroom? And with your family? And with your friends?

2.3 And what do you tend to do with silences? Fill them? Avoid them? Enjoy them? Worry that the class will get out of control during them? I find it helpful to look on silences and pauses as part of the words, rather than as something separate. In general, what other messages are carried by the *way* you speak?

2.4 I find it useful to distinguish between my first voice (my choice of words) and my second voice (everything else including my volume, tone, speed, body language, gesture, transmission of feelings). Then I can ask myself helpfully provocative questions such as 'Do my first voice and second voice say the same thing?' and 'If not, what is the effect on my students?' 'Which is the one I really mean, and which is the one they really listen to?' Can you try to monitor both your first and second voice? If you can, try to notice when they say the same thing, and when they give different messages.

2.5 From time to time during the day, when giving explanations or instructions in your class, make some subtle changes just to confirm to yourself that you have choices in addition to your habits. You could experiment with any of these: Be a bit more succinct, then stop and listen. Notice if you get carried away with the delightful sound of your own voice! Leave a few short pauses during which you listen and observe. Deliberately lengthen your existing pauses by just a second or so. Be behind your voice so that you speak with the force and warmth of your full presence. Speak just a little more softly than usual. These are just examples, but better still, experiment with small changes of your own.

Do you have the typical 'teacher's intonation' (just as priests,

politicians and others have theirs) which maintains distance between you and the class? Just for an experiment you could try changing it, not so that it sounds different to others, but so that it feels different to you. Perhaps speak with one degree less anxiety, and one degree more intimacy. Again, make your own experiments.

3 *Your use of power and authority*

This is about the politics of the classroom, and particularly about *your* classroom politics, as manifested through the way you share or don't share power and authority with your students. Your political system is part of your overall classroom atmosphere which your students are immersed in for the whole of every lesson. There are two aspects to the political question. The first is 'To what extent are you aware of all the decisions that you are taking before and during your lessons?' And the second, which can only be answered after working on the first, is 'To what extent do you share power and decision-making wherever it is appropriate and possible?'

In other words, do you essentially trust or mistrust your students' capacity to become more self-evaluating, self-directing and autonomous? Or do you trust it with your first voice and mistrust it with your second? And if you feel you do have this basic trust, then are there perhaps opportunities for them to take more responsibility for their self-direction which you are missing?

3.1 Over several days keep a note of the decisions you take that affect either what your students learn or how they learn. This is not as easy as it seems because many decisions are taken habitually rather than consciously, simply as part of being a teacher. Some of the areas my decisions cover seem to be: the planning of what is to be done; deciding how it is to be done; deciding how decisions are to be made; how learners make sense of their learning; how a valuing and supportive atmosphere is maintained; how group difficulties and individual feelings are recognised and worked with; making class rules and contracts; dealing with their infringement; maintaining engagement and joy.

3.2 When you have identified a number of individual decisions divide them into those which are entirely non-negotiable (e.g. the lesson starts at 10.30; the syllabus is determined by the ministry; the book is already chosen; school is compulsory), and those which you could in theory negotiate with your students (e.g. how we start the lesson, which exercise we leave out, whether we have a dictation and how we go about it …). Now discard those decisions that you

have marked as non-negotiable, and divide the negotiable ones into those you feel would be a high risk to negotiate with your students, and those which would be a low risk.

3.3 Build some of the low risk decisions into the appropriate parts of your lesson, and invite your class to participate in making the decision. (Examples might include: 'Would you like to do the exercise this way or that way ... or do you have another suggestion ... ?' 'What would be useful and enjoyable homework to follow on from what we've done today ... ?' 'What shall we do with the mistakes from the dictation ... ?'.) If they have become unused to making decisions, they may be reluctant to participate at first, but that's quite acceptable, since you only ask learners to do what they are ready for, and you do this gradually, perhaps at first going with their initial preference for the teacher to provide the guidelines. To impose self-direction on a learner who is not ready for it is just another form of teacher-centred tyranny. The important thing is that you make the invitation, because that in itself educates.

3.4 Is there room for negotiation in the way you give instructions for an activity? After giving the instruction, can you consult the students to see if anyone has any variation or other suggestion for how the activity might be done? (When I was eleven, if my Latin teacher had asked me for suggestions on how we could make our learning more interesting, I could have given him many, but he never asked.)

3.5 And after finishing an activity, you probably review the learning content with your students. But can you also review the process of doing it? ('What did you enjoy about doing this ... ? What was not so enjoyable? How could we change it so that you would learn more from it ... ?')

There are many non-negotiable constraints on the students (syllabuses, exams, teacher, other learners, parental choice, school facilities, class size and mix) which impose directions they do not choose, and which are not optional. The Facilitator helps learners to deal with the impositions where they have no choice, and also to exploit the choices that are still open to them.

4 Your attention to the processes in the group

4.1 This is an exercise of attention. Can you from time to time in a lesson deliberately broaden your attention to take account of more of what is going on in the group? The aim is to notice along a wider

waveband, to empathise, to put yourself in the place of others to get an idea of how the lesson looks and feels from their point of view. This requires not only mental attention, it is also helped by openness of feeling and lack of physical tension. Who in the group is struggling? Who is dominating? What are the contribution rates? What is the misunderstanding? Who is engaged and who seems not to be? Can you 'see' the learning going on in some of them? What is silently bubbling away just below the surface?

4.2 Inviting feedback at the end of lessons is a way of drawing everyone's attention to the processes in the group. Do you ask for feedback? And do you ask for it in such a way that students feel able to speak honestly? (The opposite, which I know in myself, is a kind of defensiveness and reluctance to have feedback which is carried by my second voice while my first voice apparently requests feedback. The resulting crossed message makes it difficult for my students to speak sincerely.) Next time you ask for feedback try to notice your choice of words and your voice tone, and indeed your real underlying intention. If students are not used to being taken into account and to having their views valued, they may at first find it difficult to give feedback. But again the fact of doing it at all is in itself educational.

4.3 Feelings are part of the powerhouse of the group process. Your students' feelings about themselves and each other, about what they are learning and how, all affect the quality of their learning. Your feelings too have a great effect on the group. There is no choice in this, the only choice is whether you pay attention to it or not. So, when it seems appropriate, perhaps when inviting feedback or having a review session, can you invite group members to say how they feel about being in the group and about what they are doing? And when there are disagreements or conflicts, which every group has, can you allow opportunities for them to be voiced? As Facilitator, you don't have to 'solve the problem' or 'make the feelings go away', simply respect, listen and understand. What they say is a fact, and facts are friendly to the consciously developing group.

4.4 Notice how you typically behave in non-classroom groups of which you are a member. What are your ways of making a group safe for yourself? Being silent, or careful, or outspoken, or funny, or confidential, or reckless, or foolish, or responsible, or sensitive, or insensitive or indispensible? How do your preferred roles change in an established group, a new group, a small group, a big group, a group of colleagues, or strangers, a group you've invested in, a group you haven't invested in, a group you value, a group you

don't? What does your particular repertoire of group behaviours tell you about your behaviours in the classes you teach? What kinds of student behaviour do you admire or disapprove of? Are those similar to or different from some of your own behaviours in groups?

4.5 To what extent is your preferred teacher role one of distance on the one hand, or intimacy on the other? How much are you able to be yourself as well as the teacher? As the group gains its momentum, are you able to be a group member youself, learning alongside the others, not necessarily learning the same thing – after all you already know the topic – but perhaps learning about their learning through your watchfulness, learning about your capacity to see the options and then to make the right intervention at the right time? Are you able to be somehow 'on the same side of the learning fence'?

5 Noticing your own attitudes and beliefs

5.1 What do you really believe, according to your inner thoughts and deepest convictions, about learning and teaching? Is this embodied in the way you behave and relate in the classroom? What discrepancies are there between your beliefs, your intentions and your behaviours?

5.2 And what discrepancies can you notice between what you think you do and what you actually do, and what you'd like to do? How can you explore this more, and through conscious realisation, turn these discrepancies to advantage?

5.3 What is it like to be taught by you? How might an observant and sensitive student in your class describe your unique psychological signature, the atmosphere you create by the way you are? I have heard it said that 'we teach what we are', and I am aware that while the topic I teach may be the cognitive focus for the class, my students are immersed all the time in the manifestation of my attitudes towards, for example, authority, gender, time, mistakes, correctness, money, other people, individual differences, speed and slowness, and, not least of all, my attitudes towards myself. Can you catch the way your attitudes leak into the class atmosphere?

5.4 What habits do you have in the way you teach? I'm thinking of things like: your first words on entering the class; catch phrases; the pile of stuff you take into the class; how you begin a lesson; remarks you always make to a certain student; fossilised jokes; talking to one side of the class; giving the same examples, and so on. Identify a typical teaching habit of yours and try to do the

opposite for a day – not because it's better that way, but as an experiment in working consciously rather than compulsively.

6 Redefining problems. Seeing things differently

6.1 Take a problem that you have at the moment in one of your groups (a learner who is difficult for you, lack of materials or equipment, a conflict in the group ...). Which components of the problem are 'out there' and which are 'in here'? And which can you change in some way, and which can you not change?

6.2 Of the aspects of the problem that you cannot change, can you find a different outlook, another viewpoint from which the problem looks different? This is an important skill to cultivate, not just for your own health, but because your students' view of problems is influenced by yours. Do you sometimes find a creative side to a difficulty? Can you turn a problem to advantage?

7 Your own inner state

This is the biggest question and the closest to home. Your inner state determines your outer behaviour, and speaks eloquently through your second voice. It affects the intelligence and warmth you can bring to situations as well as the anxiety or pleasure you get from them. It also affects the amount of energy you expend.

7.1 Your energy. On what do you spend your energy while at school? What exhausts you in a day of teaching? How does that differ from a day spent at home? Or the weekend? Or a day on holiday? Why the difference? And what is the difference between a good day and a bad day? What classroom events in particular consume your personal energy? And from what events do you derive energy? How much energy do you use on being impatient in the classroom? Is it possible next time to experiment with different and less costly responses to the same situation? Can you change the situation by changing your response to it?

7.2 Centering yourself. It may help you (as it does me) to think of this in two stages. The first has to do with letting go of the tensions that steal your energy and the second has to do with freeing up more attention to pay to the present moment. So the first step means letting go of unnecesary tensions in the body, in the feelings and in the mind. In the body by relaxing the muscles that are not actually needed for the job in hand (standing, sitting, speaking, writing on the board); in the feelings by letting go of emotional tensions like

anxiety, impatience, disapproval, regret about the last lesson or apprehension about the next. And in the mind by slowing down the flow of associative, chattering thoughts, or at least allowing a bit more space between them.

This first step of relaxation frees up energy which is then available for the second step, which is increased alertness to the actions and inter-actions of the present moment. When the body is relaxed, and the feelings are open, and the mind is ready, I am more able to participate in and be present to what is happening here and now. I am actually more present, less absent. You can call this state 'relaxed alertness'. 'Relaxed' refers to letting go of tensions as far as possible, and 'alertness' refers to spending the energy thus saved on increased attention.

There are many ways of centering yourself, and you may have your own, but most will contain these two steps in one form or another. Experiment with your own ways of doing what I have described above, and take great interest in what you find out about yourself while looking for the results. A sustained and gentle search in this direction will lead to subtle and significant changes in your classroom.

Conclusion

Facilitation is a rigorous practice since more is at stake. It pays attention to a broader spectrum of human moves than does either Lecturing or Teaching. The move from Lecturer to Teacher to Facilitator is char-acterised by a progressive reduction in the psychological distance between teacher and student, and by an attempt to take more account of the learner's own agenda, even to be guided by it. Control becomes more decentralised, democratic, even autonomous, and what the Facil-itator saves on controlling is spent on fostering communication, curi-osity, insight and relationship in the group. This necessitates the development of a range of Facilitative skills and awarenesses, some of which have been referred to in the questions above.

Facilitation does not allow me just to work on my students 'out there'; it also requires me to work on myself 'in here'. The way I am becomes part of the learning equation, and from the humanistic point of view the way I am is not fixed but capable of development throughout my life. What makes this approach so exciting and so revitalising is that I find I can help my students' learning through my own learning, and my own learning is not just something I do before and after the lesson, what really counts is the learning I do during the lesson. My students' learning may be about the topic, but my learning is about the group and

its members including myself, now, moment by moment. This is what keeps me and my students on the same side of the learning fence. Perhaps I even set a limit on the learning my students can do during a lesson by the amount of learning I am doing alongside them and at the same time.

Suggestions for further reading

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