

The article which follows was written by Susanna Soler Sabanés, one of the participants of our ECML workshop on Group Facilitation. It focuses on the mentor-teacher as facilitator in a virtual context, which is becoming more and more widespread in our electronic age.

It should be interesting for the reader to draw some parallels between facilitating the thinking-learning process of a group and helping the thinking-learning process of someone in a one-to-one context.

ONE-TO-ONE FACILITATION **IN A VIRTUAL CONTEXT**

Susanna Soler Sabanés

Introduction

This article focuses on the abilities and techniques developed by a teacher trainer as a facilitator within the frame of a training programme for secondary teachers of foreign languages in Catalonia (Spain).

The programme's main aim is to raise and develop teachers' consciousness about their own practice through careful observation, sharing these observations with colleagues, bridging the gap between personal practice and theoretical background and, finally, finding out new and innovative ways to retrace pedagogical and methodological action in class, so as to achieve better results with students of foreign languages.

The training course consists of ten sessions of three hours, from October to May. Teachers in secondary schools working nearby are grouped together under the supervision of another teacher who acts as their coordinator-trainer. In Catalonia trainers are part-time teachers and teacher-trainers, as staying close to classroom reality is considered a key point.

The members of the group within a training course can keep up communication with each other and follow the development of the contents in the programme, from session to session, with the help of a cooperative virtual space (hosted by Moodle). The virtual space is used to work together, share experiences and even write documents together (wiki project). It's also used to show what everyone is doing in his/her own classroom (materials, live 'shooting' of classroom sessions) and to communicate whatever is needed: information, feelings, reports, etc, with the help of the forum.

On some occasions, this virtual space helps to keep the teachers who missed a session on track. In such circumstances the session can be experienced through the virtual environment.

Setting the scene

The text presented here is the transcript of a chat between one of the teachers enrolled in the training programme described above and myself as his trainer. The teacher was ill and missed the second session of the group training. The first three sessions are dedicated to setting the personal goals for improvement: teachers are asked to observe themselves with the help of a logbook and to ask themselves a question that will start the process of deep reflection and building up of an action plan for improvement.

The opportunity to use the written transcript of the chat to revisit the whole experience and be able to model my own performance as a trainer was not to be missed. Some of the abilities or techniques I used were conscious but I knew I could dig much deeper, learn much more if I looked closely at the unconscious ones. Do I really put my educational values into practice when training?

After reading the whole conversation several times, I decided to divide it into eight chunks according to the natural flow of the dialogue. I'm going to describe what happened but especially HOW it happened and pull out the abilities, techniques, and strategies underneath.

Modelling the chat

CHUNK 1: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:04 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:32



18:04 Jorge M.: Hello



18:06: Susanna Soler has just entered this chat



18:06 Susanna: Hi Jordi!!!!



18:06 Jorge M.: Here I am



18:07 Jorge M.: how are you?



18:07 Susanna: Let's see if **we** could manage this! Let's start!



18:07 Jorge M.: ok



18:08 Susanna: First of all I'm going to ask you to write on a piece of paper the research question you wrote on the portfolio again and also to write it here for me.



18:08 Susanna: **We** 'll have to work slowly, **we** can't do anything else



18:09 Jorge M.: the question or the answer to the question?



18:09 Susanna: Sorry, only the answer.



18:10 Jorge M.: ok

According to Dr. Albert Mehrabian, an expert in non-verbal communication, the weight of words is only 7%, or put another way, 93% of the communication process is not the words we use but vocal qualities (38%) and body language (55%). This means that in a virtual dialogue we should be especially careful with the words we use because there's no other way to convey meaning.

In this first moment of the conversation my main objective was to welcome my trainee to a comfortable space, to build an environment where he felt secure and free. The only way I could do it was through words, so I used the pronoun "we" and the plural forms on several occasions to break any possible distance, to reassure him that this was going to be a shared process; he was not going to walk alone.

My second objective was to fix his attention on the work we were going to develop so I asked him to write the question. Although we were in an oral process of communication, I used this technique to concentrate his whole attention on the question that, on the other hand, was HIS question. We were starting from him, from his doubts, from his questions. The process of writing helps the writer to choose among hundreds of possibilities and pushes the teacher to get his/her priorities right. It also creates an "object" (the question) that is outside both, teacher and teacher trainer, and can be observed and manipulated.

CHUNK 2: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:10 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:12



18:10 Jorge M.: So, what I'd like to change is among other things my dedication to diversity



18:11 Jorge M.: I feel that sometimes I have my students a little bit uncared for.



18:11 Susanna: Now underline the words that you consider KEY words in the question that you have written. Don't think too much: instinctly, which ones would you choose?



18:12 Jorge M.: dedication, diversity,



18:12 Jorge M.: uncared for



18:12 Jorge M.: this one is very important

A second main aim in this process is to be able to go deep to the point where there is confusion, trying to clear away all pre-conceptions and other beliefs that can hide the real worry and be able to set it afloat in a clear way. To achieve this I asked him to underline the words he considered key words. For a second time, highlighting some words and ignoring others, *he* was making his mind up, *he* was choosing priorities.

This piece of conversation lasted three minutes, but I only talked for one. I let him answer in a free way. I did not interfere in the natural flow of words. He had entered a part of the talk that is more a dialogue with himself, with his inner self. He was pondering deeply and I was there just to gather up his thoughts. Silence is a great tool for teacher trainers, it leaves space. Not always easy to keep!

CHUNK 3: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:12 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:21



18:12 Susanna: I have also underlined DEDICATION and UNCARED FOR.



18:13 Jorge M.: well



18:13 Susanna: Now let me explain to you why I have underlined these words.



18:13 Jorge M.: ok



18:15 Susanna: They are like two antagonist words: Dedication is the opposite of uncared for, **isn't it?**I've also been surprised because both talk about you....on the other hand the word DIVERSITY is kept on a second place, the word that refers to the students. **What do you think?**



18:16 Jorge M.: one moment



18:17 Susanna: don't worry, this is slow, I'm here waiting peacefully.



18:17 Jorge M.: perhaps I think too much on myself!



18:17 Susanna: *is that what you think?*



18:17 Jorge M.: I'm not the important one, the students are



18:17 Jorge M.: no, I have not finished



18:18 Jorge M.: diversity is part of life, it has always been, although now it's somehow extreme



18:18 Jorge M.: I'm used to work with homogeneous groups



18:19 Susanna: a VERY IMPORTANT thing!!!!!! I'm not saying with my words that what you say is wrong or right. We are not judging anyone, ok? Don't worry about "doing it in the correct way"



18:19 Jorge M.:but I'm talking about me again



18:19 Jorge M.: well yes, I say what I think



18:19 Susanna: well done!!!! and who says that you mustn't do it?



18:20 Jorge M.: nobody



18:20 Susanna: we are only searching for what really worries you



18:20 Susanna: only if we discover this and we define it very well you'll be able to search and achieve a small change



18:21 Jorge M.: ok



18:21 Susanna: do we go back?



18:21 Jorge M.: yes

This third chunk begins with a change: my own very clear intervention. First I let him know I'm 'taking command', signalling my intervention at the beginning "*Now let me explain to you why I have underlined these words*", then once I've taken over, I am able to lead him to see his words from another point of view, mine. If at first it was very important in this process to connect the teacher to his inner consciousness, now he should be pushed outside and further on. Seeing things through another person's eyes helps to redefine them too. The way to do it is to share opinions among colleagues; in this way, teachers can collaborate to help each other. Strong links are built among the group then. They should be given the opportunity to have a say about each others' questions. In this

case it was only *my* point of view, which seems like a weakness in this virtual model; it works much better within a group of colleagues. More eyes, more new visions. The vision is also seen differently, depending on whether it's the trainer's or the colleagues'.

The process should never be seen as coming to an end when the trainer speaks. My aim here was to let him know I was not judging him or stating the truth. One of the values on which this training programme is built is respect for the teacher as a professional: s/he will be able to find out her/his own answers. It doesn't consider the trainer as the "one who knows" but just as the facilitator of the process. To reinforce this last image I used open questions after nearly every statement. My aim was to open new doors, not to tell him what to do or to confine him to just one option.

CHUNK 4: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:22 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:27



18:22 Susanna: are you worried for the way you behave in front of group with diversity?



18:22 Jorge M.: of course, homogeneous groups ask for little dedication



18:22 Jorge M.: but now I have very diverse groups



18:23 Susanna: **what do you want to change ESPECIFICALLY in your DEDICATION?**



18:24 Jorge M.: the orientation of this DEDICATION



18:24 Jorge M.: now it's oriented to the good or average ones



18:24 Susanna: what does "orientation" mean for you?



18:24 Susanna: do you think you don't care for those who need it?



18:25 Jorge M.: no, I do, I promise you



18:25 Susanna: so?....



18:25 Jorge M.: I have to find tools to have more time



18:26 Jorge M.: we have to find all the tools



18:26 Jorge M.: I mean, we have to teach in a way that everyone finds his place



18:27 Jorge M.: with the entire group is difficult!



18:27 Jorge M.: perhaps I can begin in the classes with fewer students

In this part of the conversation the teacher somehow ‘walks in circles’ trying to find an answer, a possible way out. Although I was aware of this, it was very important to allow him to do that (it’s only from “chaos” that new answers will spring), I didn’t want him to get lost in his own perceptions so I used a question again. Questions have been broadly studied as educational tools and, according to Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), they move the mind. Statements close, questions move forward. In this occasion the question was the tool to focus on the target, the words that carried this function were “*what*” and “*especially*”. Immediately the answer was something more precise but there was still a vague word: “orientation”. Words convey different meanings according to who says them, they are not neutral, they are the reflection of the way we represent the world. I was following HIS process so I was obliged not to interfere by insisting on my own meaning of the word, of the world! I refused to give a meaning for his word; my use of language had to be especially careful, nearly transparent here, just to help him go from generalisation to detail within his own interpretation of the situation. My question was like a small bridge “*then*”?

Something happened here that is also worth looking at: he started to use one of the devices I had used before; he used the plural forms to widen his world, to explain what was happening including himself in a group, him, me and all the secondary teachers in the same group. He was talking about something that not only happened to him, but to many people. It’s easier to tackle problems when we are not alone. This also carries with it the danger that the individual dissolves in the group and does not face reality or start any real change. In this case he didn’t do that, shortly afterwards he changed to the singular form “*perhaps I can begin in the classes with fewer students*”, he included the pronoun “I”, he didn’t avoid anything.

CHUNK 5: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:27 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:48



18:27 Susanna: now we’re going to do another exercise : write down your question in the middle of a sheet of paper; on the right draw a circle and write down the answer to the question: “with this question” what am I going away from?



18:28 Susanna: can you open the mail now? I’m sending you the diagram.



18:28 Jorge M.:ok



18:28 Susanna: I’ve sent it



18:29 Susanna: calm down, we are not in a hurry, fill in the diagram and send it to me please



18:30 Jorge M.: coming



18:31 Jorge M.: what question?



18:29 Susanna: yours, the one you wrote before



18:38 Susanna: working?



18:39 Jorge M.: yes, I've done it



18:39 Susanna: ok, one minute



18:39 Jorge M.: it's difficult this, isn't it?



18:40 Jorge M.: are they too simple answers?



18:42 Susanna: it's PERFECT! You have re-written your question on you own. Now I'll write to you for a long time, wait for me!



18:42 Jorge M.: ok



18:44 Susanna: Look, what you say is, you go away from "EXPERIENCE and BAGGAGE". We talked about that the first day. You already said then that you had been "granted a privilege". You had been granted a privilege working in a EOI¹ and you added that now things were different. They are, of course, but if you continued working but in a different EOI school, wouldn't it also be different too? Second thing, you approach a "DIFFERENT METHOD OF WORK"



18:46 Susanna: that is interesting, isn't it? You have already defined that what you want is a different METHOD. You should not blame yourself.... that before you were... that now you are....and before.... and now...LET'S LEAVE THAT! You are where you

¹ EOI: Escola Oficial d'Idiomes (Official School of Languages)

are now and you want to find out a new METHOD, WELL DONE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! What do you think?

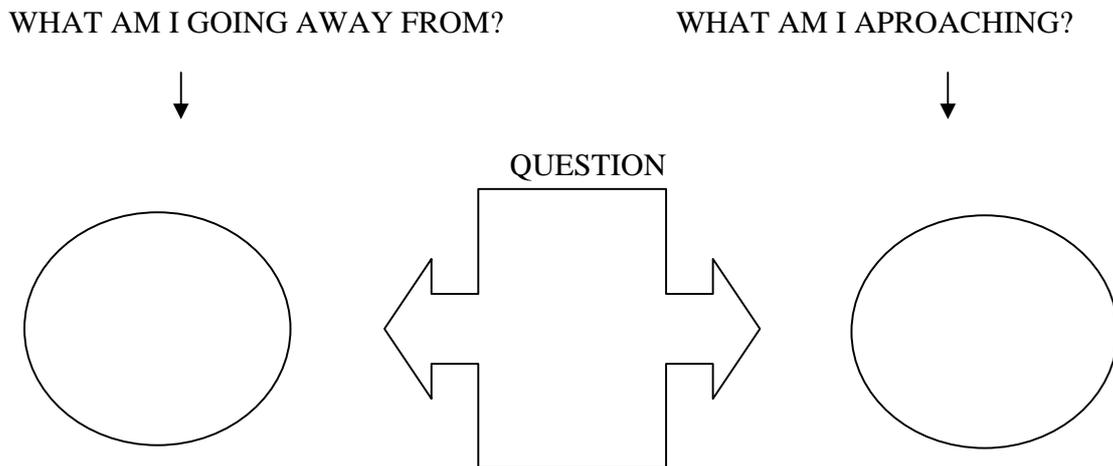


18:46 Jorge M.: you are right, in another EOI things could go in a different way , even in the same school



18:48 Jorge M.: of cooourse!!!! I open a new door every day, as we talked in the first session. What I did I did, what I need to have crystal clear now is what I want to do from now on

A first step had been achieved; the question had been formulated in a clear way. Now it was the moment to anchor it and the technique I used here was to fill in the following diagram from NLP:



With this diagram we are giving movement to objectives, in this case I was giving movement to his question and helping him to realize where all this came from: beliefs and attitudes. What he said he moved away from was his “experience and baggage” and what he said he was approaching was “a new working method”. I had a lot of information from these answers because according to Abraham Maslow who suggested a hierarchy of needs, he was going away from the need of security, belonging and self-esteem, to something a step further up the pyramid. He said he wanted to approach a new behaviour, a new way to act, the top level, the need of self-actualization or realizing one’s full potential (Psychology for Language Teachers, pp. 34). This drew a movement that was going from left-bottom to right-up in the diagram above, the movement of improvement in occidental culture.

Also a very important thing was that he was doing it on his own, he was working towards professional autonomy being able to find his own “new door to open”. I only had to reassure him, to encourage his improvement.

CHUNK 5: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:48 - Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:57



18:48 Susanna: let's go back to your question: we have to define it very well. Your "dedication", when? In what activities? Which un-cared students? Level, class, you can even give some names, you can try a change with some of your students



18:49 Jorge M.: 3rd ESO students



18:50 Susanna: very well, what activities? We can change EVERYTHING in your teaching method



18:51 Jorge M.: I have a couple of students that come from Russia, they don't speak a word of English



18:51 Susanna: how many 3rd ESO courses have you got?



18:51 Jorge M.: one speaks a bit of Catalan



18:51 Jorge M.: the other one Spanish



18:51 Jorge M.: I have them together



18:51 Susanna: do you want to work with these students?



18:52 Jorge M.:there are more



18:52 Susanna: are they all in the same class?



18:52 Jorge M.: another girl that doesn't understand anything



18:52 Jorge M.: yes, they are all in 3rd.



18:52 Susanna: in what class?



18:53 Susanna: Oh, sorry! You've already told me! 3rd A



18:53 Jorge M.: this is Catalan



18:54 Jorge M.:she doesn't follow me in any way



18:54 Jorge M.: she gets distracted with a fly



18:54 Susanna: how many are there who would need a NEW METHOD?



18:55 Susanna: that about the fly made me laugh! 😂



18:55 Jorge M.: and another one still, Nic, from Georgia, he can speak fluently English, but he doesn't work and



18:56 Susanna: this is not a class! This is the United Nations!



18:56 Jorge M.: look! I still have more... a girl from Morocco and an English girl



18:57 Jorge M.: South American boys



18:57 Susanna: do you want to investigate what to do with these students?



18:57 Jorge M.:



18:57 Jorge M.: with different levels



18:57 Jorge M.: yesssssssss



18:57 Jorge M.: with the rest of the class is perfect

Here the flow of the teacher went on and as a kind of monologue. The arrow of confidence acted as an opening of the inner worries. He didn't pay attention to my questions that were trying to bring him back; he just went on and on. I used empathy and my sense of humour but he didn't stop or go out of himself. He needed time. At the end of the chunk, being allowed to be free from his burden, he himself opened his eyes to the whole class. He moved from the individual students who worried him to the whole class. This is the moment I asked him to go back to our work, but he was really overwhelmed by what was happening to him and the negative flow started again.

CHUNK 6: Monday, 30th October 2006, 18:57 Monday, 30th October 2006, 19: 12



18:57 Susanna: OK! Look back at your question and add the specific detail you feel necessary



18:59 Jorge M.: How can I make my dedication better with foreign students and also with the native ones who don't want to work, just because they don't understand anything or because they are no capable of, or because they have to much of it and play with me



18:59 Jorge M.: ?



19:00 Jorge M.: I give them extra material



19:00 Jorge M.: I give them advice every day



19:01 Jorge M.: I ask them every day in class



19:01 Susanna: eps!!!!!!!!!!!! You're running too much!!!!!!!!!! Do you really know that they are "not capable"?



19:01 Jorge M.: **but it doesn't seem that they improve**



19:01 Susanna: **"it doesn't seem" good point....**



19:01 Jorge M.: ok ok



19:02 Susanna: now what we are going to do is to INVESTIGATE if our initial INTUITIONS are right or not



19:02 Jorge M.: well actually they don't do



19:02 Susanna: The question we have to re-write it again....



19:02 Jorge M.: ok



19:04 Jorge M.: do I have to re-write it again?



19:04 Susanna: Jordi, look at what you have written before... read it all again.... you do A LOT OF things and your students "DON'T IMPROVE AT ALL"?.....



19:05 Jorge M.: I answer



19:05 Jorge M.: I give them work but they don't do it



19:05 Susanna: ok



19:05 Jorge M.: they don't care a straw about my suggestions, sorry for using the expression



19:06 Susanna: we all, teachers of ESO , say the same



19:06 Jorge M.: when I ask them, silence, till another person answers



19:06 Susanna: NOBODY does ANYTHING? NOBODY cares about ANY advice?



19:06 Jorge M.: yes I know my problems are very usual problems



19:07 Susanna: NOBODY?



19:07 Jorge M.: the problem is this is a very extreme situation, I'm serious



19:07 Susanna: Ok but..... NOBODY?



19:08 Jorge M.: Nic follows me



19:08 Susanna: and?.... who else?



19:08 Jorge M.: and Pavel, a Russian boy, from time to time he does something



19:08 Susanna: and?.... who else?



19:09 Jorge M.: but Elena, a Russian girl whose grandfather is Catalan, from those children who had to leave and go to Russia, she leaves woks blank, and she says she doesn't know



19:09 Susanna: I've asked WHO DOES SOMETHING!!



19:10 Jorge M.: nic and pavel



19:10 Susanna: and?



19:11 Jorge M.: isn't it enough?



19:11 Susanna: answer...



19:11 Jorge M.: Pavel's motivation is zero



19:12 Jorge M.: Nic is good, but he plays with me



19:12 Susanna: **JORDI!!!!!!!!!!!!!! From ALL the students in 3rd.A, who DOES SOMETHING?**



19:12 Jorge M.: All others work so very well, they are 25

There are many strategies that do appear here again, use of silence, empathy, use of questions, using the research question as a neutral space where we both go when the conversation comes to a standstill. But I'd like to point out two strategies that I have not mentioned before: one is the use of capital letters to "speak louder", a use that is more direct than other strategies and can be also more harmful. In this chunk I somehow felt I was losing him again, as he entered in the whirlpool of his own brooding sensations.

The second strategy is repeating or paraphrasing the teacher's words, taking them and delivering them back to the speaker. It works like an echo that helps him/her to listen to his/her own mind and makes him react. Some authors talk about this as "shadowing":

"Repetition sends a message of rapport between the communicators, who thereby experience that they shared communicative conventions and inhabit the same world of discourse" (Deborah Tannen in Tim Murphy's 'Exploring conversational shadowing. Language Teaching Research, 2,5 (2001) pp.128.155).

I like to see it as well as an innocuous leading command, I did not add anything from my own world, but I took his and helped him go on.

Again, as in chunk 5, he finally opened up to the whole vision. The disproportion between the 25 students who worked very well and the two whom he constantly mentions, Nic and Pavel, was overwhelming. He was clearly seeing things through a biased pattern. I felt I had to push him out and so I dared to call his attention loudly: *"JORDI!!!!!!!!!!!!!! From ALL the students in 3rd.A, who DOES SOMETHING?"* The use

of a straight command was not judgmental but technical, it had to come to a stop and I could only do it with words.

But the following chunk shows how careful I as a trainer have to be: the conversation moves to personal regret; I had to re-establish the feeling of community, of shared, collaborative work.

CHUNK 7: Monday, 30th October 2006, 19:13 Monday, 30th October 2006, 19: 14



19:13 Jorge M.: sorry



19:13 Jorge M.: I'm not answering what you're asking me



19:13 Susanna: UFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF.....



19:13 Jorge M.: I though you were asking me about the ones who give me problems



19:14 Susanna: There's nothing to say sorry about!!!! Read all our conversation again, the one you can see on the screen and tell me what you think about it



19:14 Jorge M.: ok

CHUNK 8: Monday, 30th October 2006, 19:19 Monday, 30th October 2006, 19: 45



19:19 Jorge M.: I think that I get too obsessed about what I do for them and perhaps I do not do so much a I claim I do, sometimes I think I have them uncared for, that was my first doubt, but I don't leave them so uncared about



19:20 Jorge M.: I Have to find a new method, because I'm dealing with new students, and the method I used in EOI schools is worthless here



19:22 Jorge M.: the group works very well, but if I think of these students my perception changes, the perception I have of the whole group



19:23 Jorge M.: I keep going around and around the theme of what I do, and what I have to do is to start thinking about WHAT I HAVE TO DO



19:23 Jorge M.: better said, what WE HAVE TO DO



19:26 Jorge M.: I have to devote more time, and see what I have to do to make them devote more time



19:26 Jorge M.: this is my reflection



19:27 Jorge M.: tomorrow I have a small group, I'll start to work seriously



19:27 Susanna: Now I'm going to write for a long time, ok?



19:28 Jorge M.: If I ask for advice to the other teachers the answer is, give them some homework and let them do it, what do you think about this answer?



19:28 Jorge M.: ok



19:31 Susanna: Look, we have achieved a question that can be like that: HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY METHOD OF DEALING WITH DIVERSITY with those students who do not follow in class 3rd.A? Do you feel comfortable about it?



19:31 Jorge M.: a lot



19:32 Susanna: PERFECT!!!! Now you have to pay me a lot of attention.... 😊



19:32 Jorge M.: yes



19:34 Susanna: You are so worried about the situation of 5 or 6 boys and girls, the other 25 you say that they follow you well, don't you? . You worry because you want to do it well, because you care about students and you believe in the work you have in your hands.



19:34 Jorge M.: yes



19:34 Jorge M.: you've said that so well



19:35 Susanna: this.... let me tell you with this word: this makes me hold you in high honour....The important thing now is that we are able to change your WORRIES for ACTION PLANS.... do I make myself clear?



19:36 Jorge M.: crystal clear



19:36 Susanna: What we can't change.... well it's worthless to complain about, to lose time.... what we CAN change , then go ahead.... let's see HOW we can work it out



19:37 Jorge M.: as I've told you, I'm going to start brand new tomorrow at 8 in the morning, I have half of the group 3rdA



19:38 Jorge M.: first of all we'll try to change our common perception of the class, I mean, I 'll change the one I have of them, and they'll change theirs about me, and all together we'll change the perception of the subject, English



19:39 Jorge M.: I'll tell you how it works



19:39 Susanna: Wait a moment!



19:39 Jorge M.: ah, ok



19:40 Susanna: Well , I mean yes



19:40 Susanna: That is what I was going to tell you



19:40 Susanna: keep your question and bring it along for the next meeting



19:40 Jorge M.: ok



19:41 Susanna: Take your logbook and when the next session with 3rd.A is finished, write the answers to the questions you have in the logbook, ok?



19:41 Jorge M.: yes, of course



19:42 Susanna: And that's enough for today! Thanks a lot for your dedication!



19:42 Susanna: See you on 22nd and we'll talk much more!!! You've done very well, really



19:42 Jorge M.: thanks to you, the truth is that it's been very rewarding, although I feel a bit dull today



19:43 Jorge M.: yes? Well, let's see if it gets better



19:43 Jorge M.: see you on the 22nd



19:43 Susanna: a last advice: when you feel really worried with the group 3rd.A, LOOK at those students who are doing it all right



19:43 Susanna: a big hug



19:44 Jorge M.: one for you too, see you on 22nd



19:44 Susanna: bye!



19:44 Jorge M.: bye!!



19:45: Susanna Soler has left this chat



19:45: Jorge M. Has left this chat

Again significant things happened here: the teacher started speaking using the plural form, as I had been doing during the whole conversation. He kept the plural to produce the outcome of the dialogue. He himself was creating his own community from a collaborative point of view. If something had to change, it was not he alone who was able to change it, but all the persons (students) involved in the process. He was also aware that a change of perception was needed, but I had not told him so in a direct way. He got to that point on his own. He stopped feeling that he was the only one to blame and he also stopped seeing certain students as the only ones to be blamed. He moved towards a collaborative perspective on his own action research. This view of change as being a collaborative process is very well echoed by Goswami and Stillman's (1987: preface) in the book Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers (Anne Burns, pp16)

“They collaborate with their students to answer questions important to both, drawing on community resources in new and unexpected ways. The nature of classroom discourse changes when inquiry begins. Working with teachers to answer real questions provides students with intrinsic motivation for talking, reading, and writing and has the potential for helping them achieve mature language skills”

I talked a lot in this piece of conversation because I had two important things to do as his trainer: first of all, to praise him for his hard work, secondly to show him how to go on. The way to do both was through the use of positive language. Giving positive interpretations is a key ability for trainers, the ability to open new paths, new possibilities from a basis of self-assertion.

Finally, the technique I pointed out to him was using a logbook as a way firstly to describe and secondly to observe, what was going on in his class. Although he had made a big step, we were still moving in the conscious mind, in the theory of what was happening, in his representation of it. We were in the first phase of research, now we should look for more evidence; make observations with the use of instruments to help us be more objective. The logbook would be that first tool.

Conclusions

I've summarised the conclusions of this article in the following chart:

| SUPPORTING | WHAT DID I DO? | HOW DID I DO IT? |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher and his/her classroom is at the centre of the process. • The teacher is first of all a human being and the emotional side should be respected and cared for: Deep worries rest deep inside. • The teacher's job is very important. • Expectations of a teacher's potential should be maintained at a high level. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I placed the teacher at the centre of the situation. 2. I built a safe and collaborative environment and showed empathy. 3. I followed his doubts and worries to make him aware there was also a positive side. 4. Use of SILENCE. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. -Shadowing (repeating, paraphrasing) his words, sentences. - Use of linking words to bridge communication: then, so, etc. 2. - Use of plural: "we" "us". - Use of fun & laughter. - Creating a neutral space (outside us as persons) to talk about it: the question of research 3. - Use of positive language: words to praise and encourage him. Use of questions to check if what I said was what he wanted to mean. Use of questions to broaden his vision of the issues |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only possible starting point to achieve significant changes and improvement is rethinking your own practice: getting inside the classrooms, | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I helped him to rethink his practice. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. – Making him write at certain moments in the process. Use of written language to stop action and provoke meditation. Use of the technique of underlining key words to help focus. |

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| <p>observing, sharing observations and reflecting on it all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Method should be coherent with contents. | <p>6. I led him towards a process of autonomous learning.</p> <p>5. I pointed out the importance of collaboration and starting from reality.</p> | <p>Making him read his own words to restart thinking when stuck.</p> <p>6.- Use of open questions to move the thinking process</p> <p>7.- Use of plural forms Not accepting his forgiveness. We are equals, working hand in hand.</p> |
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Websites

Rex Sikes ultime NLP Home Study Course

<http://esnips.com/doc/2de5a02b-a410-446e-adfb-cb0914e8c106/Rex-Sikes-Ultime-N.L.P.-Study-Course>

Vilanova i la Geltrú, 10th December 2006