



CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.

Observation Activities in Teacher Development

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Introduction

This is the second and final article on using observation for teacher development in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. In the first article, I discussed how both self- and peer observation can be effective tools in teacher development. The purpose of this article is to present and discuss several peer observation activities that EFL teachers can use to gain insights into their teaching.

I would like to stress a point I made in the first article. Invite a colleague whom you trust and respect to observe you. Using a trusted colleague allows you to focus on your teaching, and not worry about being observed.

Observation Task #1: Seating Arrangements

The point of this observation is to contemplate the variety of classroom seating arrangements that are possible. Have your colleague observe and draw the seating arrangements that you use in your teaching. Analyze what your colleague reports; give your interpretations as to which seating arrangement(s) would promote language learning. Are there other seating arrangements that you could use to help your students learn better?

Observation Task #2: Teaching Materials

The point of this observation is to look for the kinds of materials that are used in teaching. Ask your colleague to take note of all of the materials (e.g., chalk; chalkboard; overhead projector; PowerPoint) that you and your students use. Later, when you go over the results, try to describe their use. Which can be interpreted as providing opportunities for students to learn English? Are there other types of materials that you could use?

Observation Task #3: Focused Written Description

The point of the observation is for your colleague to make a focused written description (often called an *ethnography*) of a specific behavior. For example, you might be interested in learning about how you give instructions. Your colleague would write down as much as possible what you do and say when you give instructions. Later, you should go over the written description. As you study the data, think about what you do, and what you were surprised that you do.

Observation Task #4: Teacher Roles

The point of this observation is to consider the roles that you have in your classroom. Ask your colleague to do a written description on your roles as you perform them (e.g., activity organizer; lecturer). Ideally, your colleague should write down examples that illustrate what you



do to support each role. Later, analyze the roles. Consider interpretations of what each role contributes to the students' learning.

Observation Task #5: Student Roles

The point of this observation is to consider the roles that students have in your classes. Ask your colleague to do the same activity as above for describing the roles of teachers, only focus on the role of students in your classrooms. Analyze the roles. Which roles can be interpreted as productive in relation to student learning?

Conclusion

Through systematic and focused observation of classrooms, both our own and others, we can gain insights into the nature of our classrooms and our teaching. We can use these insights to help us become more effective teachers.

Please take the time to give us the addresses of anyone else you think might be interested in receiving this newsletter of the CAPE Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk. And don't forget to write us with any comments you might have. Mahalo!

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