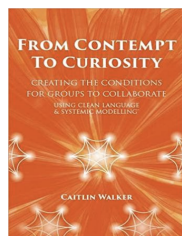


REVIEWS 書評

Book Review

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From Contempt to Curiosity: Creating the Conditions for Groups to Collaborate Using Clean Language and Systematic Modelling. Caitlin Walker. Published by Clean Publishing, Portchester, England, 2014, 216 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9574866-1-4

I was attracted to this book after watching Caitlin Walker's TEDX talk, *Clean Questions and Metaphor Models*. Walker has worked as a consultant in contexts from schools to universities, business, and local government and is an expert in training people to understand metaphor, to be sensitive to metaphors in everyday communication, and to work more skillfully in situations where misunderstanding is caused by conflicting metaphors. Her work builds on that of psychotherapist, David Grove. Her book has much to offer to teachers and university professors, both in terms of procedures, which I believe could be lifted straight from the pages of this book and done in a classroom, and for anyone engaged in collaboration, management of a department, training or curriculum renewal project.

This book is an autobiographical account of eight projects Walker has led, with a chapter devoted to each, plus an introduction and a chapter for "taking stock" near the end. The explanations are very clear and the index enables one to go back over particular areas. The anecdotal nature of the book makes it easy to read and ensures that the reader sees the process

in a real context in which it was developed or used.

A recurring theme is the development of collaborative autonomy in groups. The goal is to hand over procedures to a group that they can use on their own. "... and I knew my work was done" is Walker's signature line when the group starts to function well, establish its own leadership, and have balanced interaction patterns. In other words, these processes are all about the development of intra-group autonomy.

In an interesting example, Caitlin Walker shares her experiences supporting a curriculum enrichment project for sports majors at the University of Liverpool. By teaching peer coaching processes to the students, the department was able to improve the program to such an extent that there were major gains in the number of students getting firsts or upper seconds, and a reduction of the drop-out rate to near zero. Though Walker mentions this phenomenal result in her TED talk, the limited time didn't allow for deeper discussion. "From contempt to curiosity" fills in some of the gaps allowing educators to go away and set up such a project.

Chapter 7, entitled "Inspiring Capability", focuses on the Liverpool project and has useful *recipes* such as *Rough Guide to Me at My Best*. In the rough guide, lecturers were asked to think of a metaphor for themselves teaching at their best; what an observer will see and hear when they are teaching at their best, what supports or hinders them, what three areas they could

improve and three things colleagues could do to support them. Staff created an orientation video for students with interviews investigating what had enabled successful final year students to get the most out of university. The areas they focused on were: learning at your best, time management, making good decisions, dealing with setbacks and how to get motivated. Students were given a handbook which was used in group tutorials. Could developing metaphors make a real difference? It seems so. One example given is a student who was lazy but brilliant, always had trouble with deadlines but still passed the course. This student said learning was like being a cheetah: “I lie around all day in a tree sleeping, then something catches my eye or I get hungry, I'm really fast, kill it, eat it and then I'm back in my tree again.” For him, time was like a cloud, and decisions were like floating in a river. After working with the tutorial group, he found the metaphor of being out in a theme park and making deliberate decisions about where he wanted to go. The workbook included a space where the group could set *developmental tasks* for each other, and his task was to use his cell phone timer for activities during the day.

Some of the most telling passages relate to occasions when Walker met resistance. “I don't do metaphors” announces one head of IT with whom she has to work. Walker tells him her metaphor of the project as white-water rafting, to which he says, “I can see I wouldn't want to work with you, I'd hate this.” To which she replies, “If you know you'd hate this and we've still got four minutes, what would an ideal project be like for you?” “It be more like designing the blueprints for a building.” she adopts his metaphor, asking if the blueprints can be in pencil to allow for alterations, and he agrees. Throughout the book, relationships are created with what she calls “exquisite attention” to language, gesture and interaction. Such

attention can bring clarity and respect in situations which seem to be deadlocked.

Chapter 6 “Getting too big for my boots” describes how her team was invited to work in a secondary school by a board of education. By training teachers and students to move away from victim / rescuer roles and to use a cycle of giving feedback, focusing on outcomes and actions (a model she calls “the drama triangle”) the behavioural norms were improved. But she comments that the project was less effective and slower because the school management team had not been consulted from the start: “The change processes should be led by the most influential points in the system” and “The motivation for change must come from within the system” are two of the principles of her approach.

Readers might need to be cautious about applying these techniques in their own settings but at the same time, I think many of the models would work well in EFL classes and teachers' workshops and could be lifted more or less straight from the book.

Some members of the Learner development SIG may remember that in 2010 the Learner Development SIG forum focused on metaphors for language learning and using metaphors in relation to autonomy. More recently Darren Elliott (2015) has presented his fascinating, ongoing research in this area. Back in 2013, after reading an excellent article in *Learning Learning* (Sykes, 2011), I asked one of my classes to discuss their metaphors for learning. What was interesting was that students' metaphors revealed defensiveness/aggression about their language learning, as six or seven people said learning a language was like having a weapon. One of the more fluent members said language learning was like being a sponge and absorbing words, while another said it was like going on a journey, meeting people on the way and getting

various different views. Several students decided to take up the journey metaphor instead of the weapon.

One question readers may have is “Aren't students going to be having difficulty using metaphor if they are not familiar with English?” Having used this kind of approach with students in Japan in 2014 and some European and Arabic students in the autumn of 2014, I would say it can help students to develop English which really belongs to them. Caitlin Walker’s book will be invaluable for anyone who wants to work with this approach.



Ellen Head taught EFL/EAP at university in Kansai from 2000 to 2014. After a period as an EFL assessment consultant and researcher for the British Council in China, she returned to Japan in 2017 and is currently teaching at Miyazaki International College. Ellen’s recent research interests focus on perceived fluency.

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