

Sept 26th 2021 Get-together Report

In attendance: Tim Cleminson, Ellen Head, Ian Hurrell, Ken Ikeda, Koki Tomita, Lorna Asami, James Underwood

Regrets: Cecilia Smith Fujishima

Discussion topics in the meeting

In this meeting we mainly discussed 3 topics. First, we discussed teaching hybrid classes and how to encourage learner engagement when some students are physically in the classroom and others are online. We then talked about exploratory practice and metacognition and student's struggles with thinking about and reflecting on their own learning. Finally we looked at the topic of implementing CEFR standards into language teaching, such as can-do lists and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals.

After the meeting, the participants provided some excellent reflections on the topics mentioned above, so I think I will let them do the talking!

Reflections

Tim - It was great to talk about some of my research ideas and get feedback from others about how they approach similar challenges. I am someone who likes to think aloud and get a lot from working things out in dialogue. Although we are all facing similar challenges, we approach them from different angles. Sharing perspectives with other practitioners is a really powerful way to interrogate your own ideas. I'm sometimes pretty direct in my own responses to others, but that comes from being engaged and caring about what they say.

I feel that's reciprocated in the group - it's a space in which we trust each other enough to share our ideas and engage critically with each other. It's also a great space for sharing teaching paradigms. Each paradigm has something you can learn from. I often feel like I know nothing, so hearing about what others do and the tools they use to teach develops my knowledge of the field and my conception of what's credible.

Lorna - Today's LD get-together was a comfortable, casual time of seeing familiar faces and meeting new people (Hello Tim, it was nice to meet you!) We sorted out various details for upcoming events and publications and talked shop as much as time allowed.

Ken's helpful tips to Ian on hybrid online teaching were from his experience as well as student feedback, Tim Cleminson's critical incident questionnaire will be put to good use in my classes this term, and Koki Tomita's comments regarding CEFR "can do" statements as well as his initial needs analysis helped me to think about a different way to set up goals for courses.

This LD get-together was a stimulating afternoon of inquiry, consultation, and camaraderie, encouraging us with positivity for this autumn term of learner development in our classrooms.

Ellen - Talking about exploratory practice is always great! It was interesting to hear how several of us have used similar tools in different ways or at different stages in the class, with the aim of helping learners to understand their own learning process. Tools which were mentioned were CEFR can-do lists, motivation graphs, SMART goals. Lorna talked about students' difficulties in articulating meta-cognitive understanding in English when linking the SMART goal to the lesson objective, and the "aha" moment when they realized they had already got it. Tim talked about exploring reflection using creative means. Ken talked about using a values questionnaire to build up (pyramid discussions I think), which he uses as a way to show students that they do actually have opinions. One of the things I like about the get-togethers is that if you attend a few times you can get insight into how other people's projects are developing, and so you learn more than you might learn from a single presentation.

Koki - We talked about high-flex teaching, exploratory practice and the CEFR in our discussions. I've personally never experienced high-flex teaching, so the participants shared a lot of insightful information. Careful preliminary research and preparation on top of normal class preparation are necessary before conducting it. In particular, teachers need to be keen on how online and face-to-face students like to interact with each other. Also, setting up the environment for smooth interaction between students taking classes online is important.

Exploratory practice is another topic by which I was intrigued. Listening to Tim's experience using EP in the classroom, I recalled that I hadn't included this type of teaching and learning practice in my lessons for so long and would like to read more on this concept for deeper understanding.

Ken - I was impressed by Lorna telling about a student who thought watching 20 videos was an accomplishment. It's great she encourages students to move from being a fly on the wall to taking control of their own learning. One idea that sprouted in my mind is to ask my students to write 10-15 words/ideas that they came to learn to use well in my course. Some of these ideas might come directly from those taught in the course, but I would hope they might develop their own insights. Fashioning those words into parsimonious form might be a good way for students to develop mindfulness in their own learning.

I liked Lorna's suggestion that relevancy is not connecting, but tying, which requires concerted focus (like with our shoes) as well as effort. I thought how I harp on my students to write how relevant their research summary is to their thesis, when instead they could find strands to tie their readings to constructing their methodology.

Ian - In this get-together, I wanted to discuss the prospect of teaching hybrid classes this semester. With the vaccination rate improving both students and teachers are eager to get back on campus for face-to-face classes. However, I have some classes where 1 or 2 students cannot enter the country so they need to join the classes virtually. I already have some ideas about how I will approach this. With the number of students online being so small, I was hoping

that I could bring a computer to the class and have the students join virtually through the computer screen. For some of the classes, the students are required to bring a computer to class, so I thought that I could have students log into Zoom in the classroom when doing group work with the students overseas.

However, I still haven't had the chance to experience teaching hybrid classes so I was eager to hear the experiences of the other participants in the get-together and get their advice. There were several useful suggestions; some mentioned that I should involve the students with choosing the method of interaction with the class. I thought this was an excellent idea and very LD! Employing Google apps such as Google Forms and Google Docs so that the online students can better participate in online activities was another suggestion. Finally Tim recommended using a Critical Incident Questionnaire to keep track of the students feelings. He also provided some useful resources

-https://teach.its.uiowa.edu/sites/teach.its.uiowa.edu/files/docs/docs/Critical_Incident_Questionnaire_ed.pdf, <http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/critical-incident-questionnaire>.

I want to express a big thank you to all participants for offering their suggestions for teaching Hybrid classes, and I look forward to trying them with my students.