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A Teacher Training Program Focusing on Communicative Methodology for Brazilian Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

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A Teacher Training Program Focusing on
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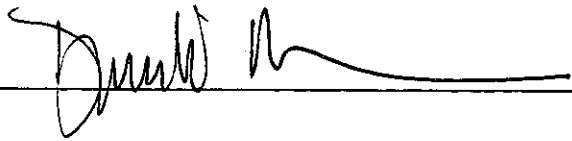
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for
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This project by Alberto de Paula Santos is accepted in its present form.

Date: December 4, 1986

Project Adviser: 

Project Reader: Ronald Occinengo

ABSTRACT

This project is the result of efforts to set up a teacher-training program for the Centro Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos de Curitiba in Brazil. It is especially designed for teachers who have been using teacher-centered classroom techniques and the traditionally structured approaches to teaching, and who are willing to change to a student-centered communicative approach to teaching English.

In chapter one, I give a general overview of the program I set up and a short description of the Centro. I also state the reasons why I decided to set up this teacher-training program for the Centro.

In chapter two, I describe the training program, giving a detailed week-by-week description. In the training program, trainees re-evaluated their personal assumptions about language, learning, and teaching. Micro-teaching activities and a shock language experience were also of great importance. They helped trainees to review their teaching, guiding it to a more student-centered communicative approach. Emphasis was given to the functional notional communicative approach to teaching ESL. To finish this chapter I make some suggestions for changes in this program.

In chapter three, I describe my conclusions about the program, about my work, and the effect it had on me professionally and personally.

ERIC Descriptors

TEACHER EDUCATION CIJE: 6,559 RIE: 9,419 GC: 400

- Teacher Training
- English Teacher Education
- Inservice Teacher Education
- Preservice Teacher Education
- Student Teaching
- Micro-teaching
- Teaching Experience

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INTRODUCTION

When I finished my Master's Program in ESL at the School for International Training in 1983, I returned to Brazil. There I operated a language institute of my own, dedicated to teaching EFL. When I arrived at Manaus, in the state of Amazonas where I had been living, I realized that I would not be able to use the approaches to teaching I had learned in the United States. The reason being was that I was operating a franchise language institute, which was part of a national network, and I was not allowed to make changes.

As a result, I decided to stop my own business in Manaus and move back to the south of Brazil. There I contacted the Centro Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos de Curitiba. In 1984 I was hired as a teacher-trainer and six months later I was promoted to course coordinator at the Centro. The position included responsibilities such as recruiting, selecting, interviewing, testing, training, and hiring new teachers. I also had to give in-service teacher-training programs to update veteran teachers on the new approaches to teaching. The new approaches and the old ones which had been in use at the Centro are briefly described in the beginning of this paper.

In chapter one, I describe my involvement with the Centro and why I decided to set up this project. A short description of the former approach to teaching at the Centro and the new one being

implemented are given. To conclude this chapter, I describe the procedures for teacher selection I adopted at the Centro.

This paper is the report of the last teacher-training program I conducted in July 1986. Two others had taken place in July 1985 and February 1986.

Fourteen women and six men took part in this last program. Some of them were teachers at the Centro and others were from other language institutes. Some were B.A. graduates and some were college students, as well as high school students who had lived in English-speaking countries as exchange students. Some of the trainees had teaching experience and some did not. Since they fulfilled the requirements I established for the training program, they were accepted. These requirements are also described in this chapter.

In chapter two, I give a week-by-week detailed description of the training program. At the end of chapter two, I make some suggestions for changes in this program.

Finally, in chapter three I write my conclusions about the program. I mention the effect this work has had on me as a professional and as a person. I discuss some changes that occurred within me when I finished the program. To exemplify, I state how effective those changes were in helping me to go ahead with my work as an EFL/ESL teacher and as a teacher-trainer.

CHAPTER ONE

This four-week teacher-training program was set specifically to be used at the Centro Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos de Curitiba in Brazil. It is also designed for binational centers or language institutes in Brazil that do not offer regular pre-service teacher-training programs. It is intended to help teachers who have been teaching English using a traditionally structured teacher-centered approach to teaching EFL.

The traditional method of teaching which I mention is a grammatically-structured approach to teaching. In this approach, the students learn in teacher-centered classroom situations. They depend on the teacher who rarely gives them freedom to say what they want to say, only what he wants them to say. Thus the students have to use the information provided to them by the teacher in a limited communicative context. In addition, classes are usually based on audio-lingual methods of drill and repetition. Grammar is presented systematically and authentic language is seldom included.

The main purpose of this student-centered communicative teacher-training program that I set up for the Centro is to have teachers change from this traditionally-structured approach of teaching to a notional functional communicative approach to teaching to be applied in student-centered classes. In contrast to the traditionally structured approach to teaching, this new approach focuses primarily on communication. Students are encouraged to say what they want to say in order to communicate

with a minimum of support by the teacher.

The notional functional communicative approach does not deny the importance of mastering the grammatical system of the language, nor does it abandon a systematic development of structural mastery in the presentation of materials. However, its concern with the communicative purpose of language has caused a re-evaluation of traditional linguistic priorities and has revived interest in discourse analysis and semantics.

This grammatical form is taught not as an end itself, but as a means of carrying out communicative intent. This change in emphasis has sometimes lowered the concern for grammatical aspects of the language, because traditional concepts of grammatical progression no longer apply.

For example, structural patterns which are normally considered "advanced" because of their complexity are often presented at the beginning of functional courses, because they are frequently used to perform the communicative function being presented. This has sometimes made the choice of language material in a functional text seem random and unplanned to those who are accustomed to the clearly defined progression followed by structural texts.

Structurally-based texts and teacher-centered approaches to teaching English as a foreign language have been in use for more than a decade at the Centro Cultural Brasil-Estado Unidos de Curitiba, which I describe next.

The Centro was founded on November 13, 1941. It is the most traditional English language institute in the state of Parana, in

the south of Brazil. It is located in Curitiba, the state capital, which has a population of about 1,600,000 inhabitants, and is considered one of the most livable cities in the country, due to its high standard of living and the cultural and educational opportunities it offers.

The Centro is part of the binational center network in the country. It is considered to be one of the best binational centers in the country. Its reputation has improved since these methodological changes in teaching were instituted. Beyond that, the Centro has been of great cultural and educational importance to the community. This is due to the fact that there is no U.S. Consulate or government representative in the city to help people have contact with the U.S. government. Besides language teaching activities, several cultural presentations take place there as well. These activities include concerts, movies, art exhibitions, conferences, drawing classes, seminars, and conversation hours open to the students of the Centro, guests, and to the English-speaking community in town.

At present, the Centro has approximately 4,200 students and almost eighty teachers. It is centrally located and occupies the first four stories of an apartment building. The Centro has a registration office, a library, staff offices, an auditorium, thirty-six classrooms, a teachers' room, the department of courses, the administrative department, and a snack-bar. The English classes are held twice a week and on Saturdays for those students who cannot attend classes on week days. The Centro offers classes to students of all ages and social backgrounds.

To continue I explain my involvement with the Centro and why I have decided to set up this program to be used there. After returning from the United States, from the School for International Training where I had taken courses towards a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree, I contacted the Centro and found out that the Department of Courses was planning to change the methodological system they had been using.

As a result of my conversation with the director of courses in 1984, I was hired to help give pre-service training to the new teachers. I helped those teachers to learn about the new developments in the field. Through in-service orientation, I helped change the methodological procedures at the Centro. Consequently, six months later I was promoted to course coordinator for the Centro.

In addition, I was also in charge of the pre-service teacher-training program. This paper is the end result of efforts to set up a pre-service teacher-training program which department administrators considered vital for the well-being of the institution. The reasoning was to update the teaching offered by the Centro and thus to maintain its good reputation. So, this paper reflects my personal and professional work with one pre-service group in July 1985, and with two groups in February and June 1986, respectively.

These pre-service teacher-training programs were of major importance in having teachers understand current ideas about teaching. They were to learn about the notional functional communicative approach and techniques, procedures, and materials

for teaching congruent with it. Only after this introduction did they start experimenting with the new ideas. Because of their negative reactions to this approach, changes were encouraged to enhance both their personal and professional development and to improve classroom procedure.

In a departure from past practice, pre-service teacher-training was established as a prerequisite for teaching at the Centro. The primary goal was to bring trainees up-to-date on the notional functional communicative approach, techniques, procedures, and materials for teaching English as a foreign language. The objective was to have trainees become able to teach through this approach, applying it to student-centered classes. In fact, this material was new to almost all of the trainees as I came to discover in the three programs I conducted.

To take part in those programs, a trainee had to go through a selection process which I established. Trainees were accepted only if they met the four following requirements:

1. The trainee had to complete an application form in English which included:
 - a resume, written either in English or Portuguese;
 - copies of university diplomas;
 - copies of diplomas or certificates of courses taken abroad, especially in English-speaking countries.
2. The trainee had to take the Proficiency Test for Teachers of English provided by Casa Thomas Jefferson, in Brasilia, considered the main binational center in the national network. The test was divided into three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension.
3. The trainee had a personal interview with the trainer, in this case myself. If the results of the test and of the interview were satisfactory I then invited the trainee to participate in the teacher-training program.

The training at the Centro was free of charge to the trainees, but was required of anyone who intended to teach there.

As a result of his performance during the program and from my observations, the trainee was then hired or not hired by the Centro. If a trainee failed the program, he was given another chance for individual in-service training, or he was invited to take part in the next regular in-service training program.

No previous teaching experience was required, but the trainee had to be able to read, write, understand, and speak English fluently. All these skills were continually evaluated, beginning with the application form filled out by the trainee, on to the last activity he had to perform during the pre-service training program.

If performance was satisfactory, the trainee received a certificate stating that he had taken part in the teacher-training program at the Centro. To give the pre-service training program more value, I suggested that a "Certificate of Participation", recognized by the State Department of Education, be awarded to the successful trainees.

This new pre-service teacher-training program was set up to better prepare the new teachers at the Centro to use the new approaches to teaching adopted at the Centro. While giving the training I decided to use student-centered techniques as much as possible. By doing so, I intended to have trainees get used to those techniques and to the notional functional communicative approach during the program. By understanding the approach and

the techniques in the training program, they would be able to transfer the knowledge they had gained to their classroom work.

The study of these student-centered techniques and of the notional functional communicative approach used in the training program, is described in chapter two which follows.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter I first give an overview of what the training program was like, followed by a detailed description of the training program itself. At the end of this chapter I make some suggestions for changes in the program.

This training program was designed to cover four weeks with two-hour sessions held five days a week at the Centro, making a total of forty hours. A maximum number of twenty trainees was set for each group due to the size of the classrooms, which were not very large. The chairs were arranged in circles and semi-circles. So, with more than twenty trainees such chair arrangements were not possible. Also, in a smaller group, all trainees had the opportunity to talk, express their ideas, exchange opinions, and better interact with the other members of the group. Group work was used for almost all of the activities during the program. For those activities to be possible, space availability was vital. If more than twenty trainees applied and were selected they would have been divided into different groups.

The pre-service training programs were scheduled for the months of December, January, February, and July. These are vacation times in Brazil. Thus, schools usually re-train regular teachers and train new ones during these months.

The following is a detailed description of the training itself. The objective for week one was for the trainees to examine their personal assumptions about language, learning, and teaching. To this end, they were involved in micro-teaching

activities in which they had to analyse the presentations of their peers and of mine, and express their personal reactions to them. In week two, they were introduced to the notional functional communicative approach through some of the literature and practical examples. In addition, they analysed the textbook to be used at the Centro, and saw my demonstrations of some of the units. Weeks three and four were spent on peer demonstrations, ongoing class observation and teaching test classes.

Again, it is necessary to mention the importance of pre-service training to help the new teachers become more self-confident and creative. It was also vital to make them aware of their roles as guiders, helpers, as part of the group, in the new student-centered approach to teaching, which was presented to them.

From the beginning I noticed that trainees were more concerned about practical issues, focusing their attention on how they had to teach, rather than what, why, and most important, who they had to teach. Seldom did they consider the purpose of what was to be presented, or care for a logical sequence in presenting the new materials. As a result of their awareness about their role as teachers in student-centered classes, trainees had a better understanding of the teaching-learning process, which was as follows.

First, we dealt with awareness of what language, teaching, and learning were. They had to become aware of what was relevant for the students to learn and what was not. It would be a waste of time and interest of the students if the teacher decided to

present the students materials that they already knew. It was also important to have trainees understand the value of what they themselves and the students brought with them into the classroom as human beings and as professionals. As important was to have trainees analyse how to teach based on what their students brought and to build upon it.

Second, trainees needed an opportunity to re-evaluate their attitudes towards patience. It was important to have them examine their attitudes towards other people; they were reminded that they would have to accept others the way they were, not the way they would like them to be.

Third, trainees had the opportunity to develop skills in learning from personal experience and from others through peer demonstrations and observation. To do so, they had to plan and present a short lesson to their peers. Another important activity was to teach an actual class to students thus dealing with error correction and feedback. After analysing all that, they were to evaluate themselves in terms of their former and present teaching abilities. An evaluation and feedback of each session, as well as a final evaluation of the entire program, were used.

Fourth, trainees had an opportunity to learn about the notional functional communicative approach to teaching through readings and demonstrations. They also had the opportunity to learn and experiment with the new techniques and materials for teaching EFL. Trainees learned how to use the In Touch¹ series of textbooks and the teacher's manual accompanying them. I informed them that they would receive additional information on all these

and other topics in future in-service training, workshops, lectures, study days, and readings.

What follows is a week-by-week and session-by-session description of the training.

Week One

In the first session, trainees interviewed each other. I divided the group into pairs, allowing each pair five minutes to interview the other. I wrote a checklist on the blackboard including items such as name, place of birth, and academic background.

The principal objectives of this session were to have trainees reevaluate their own previous assumptions about language, to exchange ideas in the small groups, and to share them later in the big group. In addition, it encouraged integration and decision making. It was also important to make trainees feel comfortable, free to talk and express their ideas and feelings.

After trainees interviewed each other, each trainee introduced the person he had interviewed to the big group. I intentionally did not introduce myself to the group, hoping that somebody would start asking me questions about myself, which fortunately did occur. I wanted trainees to feel comfortable talking to me as a member of the group.

I encouraged trainees to guess the data about me in a very relaxed atmosphere. Only after a few minutes did I introduce myself to the group. Such behavior was intended to have trainees

trust me and see me as an equal, as someone they could freely talk with to share opinions and ideas. Then I told trainees what was involved in the training program: the content, schedule, evaluation, hiring system, peer class observation, ongoing course class observation, and in-class teaching to a pilot-group.

To conclude these introductory activities, I allowed trainees to ask me questions, make comments, and get any additional information they thought to be important for them to clarify their expectations about the program. No more than fifteen minutes were necessary for this last part of the activity.

By the end of it, trainees and I were feeling more comfortable and relaxed. This was the purpose of the activity: to break the ice and to have trainees know each other in a relaxed atmosphere in order to further future interaction. This activity was also important for me to observe each individual's reaction in the group.

After the introductory activities, I divided the group into four small ones with five people in each. The purpose for the small groups was to have trainees exchange ideas among themselves. So everybody in the group had the opportunity to express himself which sometimes does not happen if he is to speak before the big group.

When the groups were arranged, I told trainees they each had five minutes to write down their personal assumptions about what language was in response to the question, "What is language?" When the five minutes were up, I asked trainees to discuss and share their assumptions in groups for no more than twenty minutes.

Each group had to arrive at a final conclusion about the topic. After all members of the group agreed on a common definition or statement, each group had five more minutes to write it down on brown paper or transparencies, to be used during the panel discussion.

Each group received brown paper, transparencies, and colored markers to underline key words or statements, thus making their presentations easier and more visual to everybody. After that, I asked each group to select a member of the group to report the conclusions of the small group during the panel discussion segment.

There were several ways to arrange the groups, but I decided to have trainees count off by fives. All members with the same number had to form a group. This procedure allowed trainees to be in different groups for each different activity. It created integration and developed a higher sense of group work, companionship, and mutual help. Thus without their noticing it, trainees started to be involved in more student-centered activities, different from the ones they were used to in traditional teacher-centered classroom settings.

To wrap up the activity, I asked a volunteer group to report the group's assumptions on language. I allowed ten minutes for each group's report. I encouraged trainees in the big group to ask questions about the topic, clarify ideas, voice doubts, and so on. In addition to the group reporter, other members of the group were asked to give the answers to the questions which the big group formulated to the group which was reporting their

conclusions.

At the end of the panel discussion, I gave trainees a handout on language², and allowed them ten to fifteen minutes to read it. Then I asked them to compare it with the assumptions which they had just elaborated. The rest of the session was taken up with group discussion. This concluded the first session of the program, which used a total of two hours.

To start the second session I first collected the written feedback about the previous session which I had assigned as homework. Then I wanted to review what we had analysed the day before, but I wanted to do it in a way that would not make trainees feel as if they were being tested. So, I decided to introduce body language. This activity would focus not only on the cultural aspects of both English and Portuguese, but also give trainees an opportunity to review their ideas about what language was. In addition, I took the opportunity to introduce some techniques from the Silent Way of teaching.³

The important objective of the activity was to have trainees be able to understand American culture and be able to interact appropriately when in contact with Americans or while teaching.

Another important goal of the activity was to have trainees become aware of the cultural differences between Brazil and the United States. They had to understand those differences themselves through personal experience, observation, analysis, contrast and deduction. The assumption was that as language and culture are closely related, it is necessary for a teacher to be able to transmit these cultural differences to his students. It

is important for the teacher and the students to be able to make the distinction between the cultural aspects of L1 and L2 to allow better understanding of the language being taught and learned. Also, the idea was to have trainees experience a new culture, especially those who had never been to the United States, to practice observation skills, and to have direct experience through observation in adapting to a new culture. The whole activity took about ninety minutes, after which a ten minute break followed.

The activity was as follows. First I asked for a volunteer to take part in an exercise without describing it to him or to the rest of the group. Then I left the room with the volunteer. I explained to him what the two of us were to do. The exercise had an American and a Brazilian standing, having a conversation. I took the role of the American and the trainee that of the Brazilian. Before returning to the classroom, I discussed some cultural contrasts of both cultures with the trainee.

Some contrasts between American and Brazilian cultural aspects focused in the exercise were:

In Brazil people,

- usually look one another in the eyes; not to do so is considered rude and might mean that you cannot trust the person.
- greet each other by shaking hands and embracing every time they meet and they look directly into the other person's eyes.
- greet their female acquaintances by kissing on both cheeks, even if the women are married or engaged.
- care a lot about physical touching and hand shaking, especially friends and family members; not to do so is considered to be unfriendly, cold, and distant.
- show their emotions and feelings vividly through gestures

and physical contact.

- expect their emotions to be understood from eye-contact, facial expression, and from having others ask about their feelings. Such attitudes show that others care about them.
- do not see interruption when other people are talking as a matter of concern. If they need to talk to someone, they just come by and interrupt the conversation. Sometimes three or more people overlap their conversation, talking at the same time.

In the United States people,

- do not maintain eye contact with another person unless they are angry or flirting; they are taught to make eye contact when they are greeting each other.
- greet each other by shaking hands when they meet for the first time.
- show their feelings more by acting, rather than by speaking them out.
- are not used to physical touching. It is considered a more intimate attitude shared by those who are really close to each other.
- consider personal space very important for them. It should not be invaded; if so, they feel uncomfortable and keep backing up.
- time their interruptions when others are talking, by showing their presence, by staying around and waiting for a pause in the conversation. Only then they make the interruption.
- do not kiss each other when they meet, unless it is a member of the family or a close friend of the other sex.

These cultural contrasts are a result of my personal experience in the United States, of studies in my Advanced English course in the M.A.T. Program, of readings about American culture, and of analysis of my own culture.

After discussing both cultural aspects described above, the trainee and I returned to the classroom to do a roleplay. The other trainees were asked to observe the simulation very carefully, and to take notes for further discussion of what struck them in the exercise. When the roleplay was finished, the discussion began. I asked trainees to say what the purpose of the exercise was.

To structure the discussion, we examined four distinct areas. First, we focused our attention on the cultural aspect. Trainees had to describe the behavior of the "American", concentrating on his actions and their possible meanings. It was important to have trainees think about their own perceptions of culture. Second, both performers and observers stated their personal feelings about the new culture presented. Third, we discussed the culture shock and how the knowledge gained through the exercise could be applied to an EFL teaching situation. Fourth, we analysed the learning in the exercise.

This analysis of the learning process touched on the following points. Trainees recognized that learning had taken place through observation or trial and error. They also had to identify and discuss what attitudes influenced their perceptions of the simulation and what skill they had used to gain information about the new culture. Trainees said if they actively entered into the simulation while observing it, or if they felt uncomfortable and tried to remain distant from the simulated culture and why they felt that way.

To sum up, I had trainees comment on what they had observed.

I asked them to express their personal opinions about the activity. Trainees were encouraged to relate personal experiences they had had to enrich and illustrate their assumptions about American culture. I also asked them to analyse what they had added or how they had changed their opinions about American culture after observing the exercise.

After that I gave trainees an illustrated handout about common American gestures⁴. Trainees analysed those gestures and contrasted their meanings in their own culture.

Following this session, I had the group break into four smaller ones and work on their personal assumptions about teaching by answering the question, "What is teaching?" The procedures were the same as those used in working on their assumptions about language. Before breaking I gave trainees a handout focusing on teaching⁵ and asked them to read it at home and compare it with what they had come up with in the day's session. This last activity ended the second session.

To start the third session I collected the written feedback about the previous day's session that had been assigned as homework. The first activity of the session was to have trainees work on their personal assumptions about learning. The same procedures used in session one and in session two to analyse language and teaching respectively were used. Then I gave trainees a handout about learning,⁶ asking them to read it at home and compare it with what they had come up with during this third session. Then, a ten minute break was given.

Returning from the break, trainees found the classroom set up in a very traditional setting: the teacher's desk at the front of the room and the chairs arranged in the regular, traditional rows. Intentionally, and without any explanation, I told trainees to sit down, get a sheet of paper and draw a horse, in exactly five minutes. I did not accept any excuse from trainees about not knowing how to draw a horse. Also, I had taken a very traditional way of behaving in the classroom, not allowing trainees to exchange ideas, talk with each other and even being a little aggressive about their questions and concerns on how to draw a horse.

Naturally, trainees were very surprised with the different attitudes I was exhibiting. When the five minutes were up, I called on a trainee to come to my desk and bring his drawing, telling the other trainees to remain silent. I started to criticize the trainee's work, telling him to fix the horse's head, nose, hooves, tail, again. I did not give any words of approval or encouragement to trainees. I took the same approach with five trainees, checking their work, commenting on it aloud, making my own corrections, telling trainees the way they should have drawn the horse. I told them to go back to their seats and to do the job again. Trainees were not allowed to justify anything or even ask for my help. I told them to do things on their own. They simply had to draw a horse, no matter what previous drawing skills they had.

Bringing trainees back to a student-centered classroom setting, I asked them to analyse the situation they had just been

in by first answering the question, "How did you feel as a student in such a classroom situation?" I allowed them fifteen minutes to give their responses, concerns, reactions, and personal feelings they had had during the activity. Second, trainees answered the question, "How would you have felt if you had been the teacher in such a teaching situation?" The same amount of time used to discuss the answers to the first question was allotted to deal with the answers to the second one. I decided to call this activity "The Draw a Horse Activity."⁷

The trainees then commented on the activity basing their ideas on the topics we had already discussed such as language, learning, teaching, interaction, communication, and all that helped them re-evaluate their former ways of teaching. It also helped them gain new concepts about language, learning, and teaching and to add to the ones they already had. We used the rest of the session to discuss the activity. This ended session three.

Session four started with trainees giving oral feedback about the previous day's session. The session started with a micro-teaching demonstration which I decided to call, "Teacher Personalities."⁸ First, I divided the group into six groups of three people. Then I elicited a list of topics which are usually found in textbooks, from trainees. The topics they suggested were: how to order a sandwich, to make a proposal, to buy a car, to invite someone to go out, to cash a check, to ask for directions, to see a doctor, and to take an order. Then each

group had to choose one topic. After trainees had chosen the topic, I allowed them five minutes to prepare a lesson plan to teach the topic they had chosen to the large group.

After preparation, I asked each group to choose someone in the group to teach a three-minute class. When the teachers were identified, I had each one draw a piece of paper from a bag. On the piece of paper, each trainee-teacher found a teacher personality he would have to perform. He was not allowed to show any of the members in his group which personality he had chosen.

To illustrate, I wrote a list of personalities on the blackboard:

- non-stop talking;
- aggressive;
- shy;
- timid;
- clown;
- unprepared;
- disorganized;
- nervous;
- resentful.

I allowed two minutes for each trainee-teacher to think about the role he had to play. Then on a volunteer basis, the role-playing started. Each presentation was to take only three minutes. Another trainee volunteered to help me time the activity. After each presentation the other trainees had to match each teacher's behavior to the list of personalities I had written on the blackboard.

When the presentations were over, I had trainees analyse the micro-teaching by answering the following questions one at a time.

- "How did you feel as a student?" (for those who observed the presentation);
- "How did you feel as a teacher?" (for those who taught the micro-teaching);

All trainees answered these questions as well:

- "What was the purpose of this type of exercise?"
- "Did learning take place?"
- "What went into planning the lesson?"

At this point, the six basic question words who, what, how, why, where, and when were focused on to direct the discussion. The discussion extended to the end of the session. If more time had been allowed, trainees would have kept talking due to their interest and involvement in the activity. Through answering the questions, trainees touched most of the main purposes involved in the activity.

The intention was to have them see themselves in one or more of the presentations. They were to analyse their ways of teaching, to put themselves in the place of their students, and to analyse their reactions and feelings to the teachers' personalities. They drew conclusions and saw what they had learned about themselves as teachers, and their relationship to the teaching content. To finish up, trainees were given five minutes to think of answers to the question: "What have I learned as a teacher in today's session?" We used the rest of the session for oral reports.

The activity in session five was a foreign language micro-teaching, called "shock language."⁹ An experienced teacher taught German to trainees. I chose that language because it is not similar to Portuguese or Spanish, thus the trainees were in contact with a language completely different from their own.

The main purpose for this activity was to have trainees as students analyse the learning process through personal experience. Thus trainees would better understand their students' learning process in their future EFL teaching.

The analysis of the teaching aspect was also of great importance. Trainees had to identify what was taught, how it was taught, who taught it, and the amount of content taught. These teaching aspects were discussed at the end of the shock language.

First, the German teacher divided the big group into Group A and Group B. Group A were the students and Group B were the observers. Each person in Group B had to choose and observe one person in Group A. The observer had to pay close attention to the person he was observing. In addition, the observer had to watch and take notes on the person's learning such things as his interest in the lesson, his difficulties, accomplishments and reactions. Before the activity started, the teacher and I made sure that everybody in Group A had an observer in Group B.

The teacher then started the class with the cardinal numbers. She had chosen the cardinal numbers from one to one thousand. She did not tell the trainees or me what the subject of the class was to be. We had agreed on this before so that the trainees and I would be in contact with something new. It also aroused curiosity, analysis, deduction, comparison and identification of the material being taught. I had asked the German teacher to teach the class in a teacher-centered way of teaching.

I participated as a student in the shock language to give trainees a chance to have me as a true peer, as a member of the

group having to struggle like them to learn what was being taught. This attitude created a better relationship between the trainees and me in the training program.

I also had the opportunity to re-evaluate the learning process involved in acquiring another language. It helped me realize what goes on in people's minds when they are learning. Such awareness helped me improve my teaching procedures toward trainees.

When the class was over, I asked each observer in Group B to go to the person in Group A he had observed. Then, he had to discuss the reactions that person seemed to have during the class. When the pairs finished the discussion, the observers in Group B reported the results of their observations about the students in Group A. These students also reported their reactions to the shock language.

After the reports, we started the general discussion focusing on some important teaching aspects. The time and the content, the length of the lesson, the techniques and the approach used, and the teacher-student interaction were carefully examined as well as trainees' personal reactions to the shock language.

Trainees were asked if the amount of material taught was too little, enough, or too much for the period of time. They discussed if the time used was enough to allow learning to take place, or if they only had a general overview of the subject. The techniques and approach in the exercise were also a subject of concern. I had trainees think about the techniques and approach used by the teacher and see if they were teacher-centered or

student-centered. Trainees had to focus their attention on the relationship between the teacher and the students. They had to examine if interaction had taken place only superficially from the part of the teacher, or if she considered them as individuals, as human beings with specific needs and problems.

Once more I asked trainees to feel free to express themselves about the activity. Indeed, they had to state any positive or negative feelings they had during the activity. Just as important, they had to state what was difficult for them to learn and why and what was easy for them to learn and why. This general discussion ended the fifth session of the first week.

Week Two

On the second week trainees had the opportunity to study the notional functional communicative approach,¹⁰ discussed in chapter one. They also dedicated some time to the analysis of pair-work activities in the classroom. Some techniques were presented on how to develop such activities. A careful study of the In Touch series of textbooks was required since they were to use that series in their teaching at the Centro. I demonstrated some units of the series and the trainees observed ongoing classes at the Centro.

Session one in week two started with trainees studying the notional functional communicative approach. I divided trainees

into five smaller groups again, being careful to have different people in each group. Then, I asked them to read, in fifteen minutes, the handout about the notional functional communicative approach they had in their portfolio.

Then I allowed twenty minutes for each group to discuss the reading and arrive at a final conclusion about its content in the small group. Their conclusions were to be shared with the big group in the general discussion about the reading. To finish this first activity, I had trainees present and discuss each group's conclusion. Presentations were given on a volunteer basis and brown paper was used for reporting.

Through this process, trainees focused on the main purposes of the day's session. First they had the opportunity to do some specific reading about the approach. Second, they had the chance to compare the reading with their experience in the training up to then. Third, they were able to draw their own conclusions on how to adapt the approach to an EFL teaching situation. And fourth, I had trainees think of how important well-planned teaching activities were for their students' learning and personal growth.

When the reporting ended, we continued the session by thinking of good ways to have students better interact in a notional functional communicative student-centered EFL class. After giving trainees some time to think and write down their ideas, I had them report their findings.

To finish the day's session, a general group discussion about these communicative teaching aspects followed. The discussion was also an introduction to the study of pair work¹¹ in session two.

The purpose of the activity was to have trainees reinforce the insights they had had about classroom interaction on the previous session. Equally important was to have them report personal experiences about these techniques, contrasting them with the ones they had been using in their teaching.

Session two started with a small group activity. I used the same procedures for group division I had used before to have trainees discuss about language, learning and teaching. After the discussion, a ten-minute break was given.

Returning from the break, I passed out some flash-cards to trainees. Half of the cards had one part of a conversation, and the other half had the other part of the conversation. To start, trainees had to find out who had the right partner to the conversation on the card they had. Matching the right person, both had to sit down and do the conversation. This was another technique I used to have trainees work with different people. It was also an example for trainees of one more technique that could be used in their classrooms.

When the conversation finished, the pairs remained the same. Then I told everybody to individually read the handout from the introduction of the teacher's manual of the In Touch series. This series was the basic pedagogical material adopted by the Centro and that which the trainees would be using in their future teaching there. To continue, in pairs, trainees had to make a list of the steps to teach each unit in the book. A short explanation to each step was also required, but on a volunteer

basis.

In doing so, I had trainees study the teacher's manual of the In Touch series which gave them an idea of the different steps which composed each unit. Also, it helped trainees understand the class demonstrations for units one and two that I gave to them in the following sessions.

Week two continued with sessions three, four and five dedicated to class demonstrations of units one and two. Trainees acted as students while I taught those units to them. I asked them to discuss each step presented during the first unit.

The discussion of each step immediately after its presentation helped trainees understand why I had taught it the way I did. Whenever they asked me why I had taught a certain topic in a certain way, I did not answer, but had the whole group think and find the most logical reason for the techniques I had used.

In addition, I asked trainees to think of other techniques that could have been appropriate to teach each step. I asked them to keep one major concern in mind while doing it: the techniques had to be mostly student-centered. Unit one was the subject of study for sessions three and four.

The whole session of day five was dedicated to unit two. I wanted trainees to have an idea of the whole sequence of a unit and how to teach it as a meaningful whole. It makes a great difference to see parts of a unit taught separately and to see all those parts taught in a logical sequence thus making the teaching

flow naturally. However, I decided to give one good example for each technique so trainees would have something concrete to begin with. The reason for this was to not confuse trainees with many different techniques and materials given, or suggested all at the same time.

For the time being, I asked trainees not to interrupt me while I taught each unit. Rather, I asked them to take notes about the techniques, approach, and materials I used; these were to be discussed at the end of the session.

I told trainees that additional techniques, suggestions and materials would be given through future pedagogical meetings, workshops, study days, seminars, peer class observations and readings. Also, they had the chance to develop new ideas while preparing classes for peer-demonstrations. I assigned trainees to observe some of the regular classes being taught at the Centro to solidify what they had learned in the training program. Through those observations they gained new ideas to enrich their class preparation. This also gave trainees more than me as the one and only model. Those class observations continued through weeks three and four.

Week Three

The first two sessions in week three were dedicated to having trainees, in small groups, prepare a lesson plan for units three and four. After preparation, each step in the lesson plan was

taught by someone in the group having the other trainees act as students. Following each presentation, I had trainees comment on it and make suggestions for improvement.

As a sequel to class preparation, I then asked for two volunteers to individually prepare units five and six. Those units were taught by the volunteers on sessions three, four, and five of the third week. Each trainee was allowed half of each session for the individual presentation. Profitable group discussion followed each presentation. The techniques, procedures and materials used for the presentations were openly discussed. Trainees gave suggestions for improvement and expressed positive or negative opinions they had about the presentations.

These class presentations were of utmost importance for the trainees as they stated in the final program evaluation. To do them, they had to put together all the information they had gained in the training program and to be able to set up a lesson plan by themselves. It was important to have them feel free to teach in a trusting situation. It was also important to have them be flexible, accept comments from their peers, make comments about their peers' presentations and about their own presentations.

Peer-teaching was of extreme importance. The purpose was to prepare trainees for the class each of them had to teach to a pilot group of real students at the Centro. That class teaching was to be their test, as no written tests were given throughout the training program. Based on my evaluation, trainees would be hired by the Centro. Trainees were aware of these evaluation

procedures, since they had been explained to them during the initial interview with me.

The fact of teaching a class to a pilot group and having it as a test had two major effects on trainees. In the beginning, they were tense and worried. Therefore, they showed great interest in learning the right procedures, techniques and materials to be used in their teaching. After the first peer demonstration took place, trainees felt more confident and comfortable. I believe this was due to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere and mutual help among trainees that had been established.

The pilot classes were groups especially formed for training purposes. They were composed of beginning students only, principally by those who had not been exposed to English. The classes were planned for the months in which the program took place and were offered to the students at lower prices. The students were informed that they would have a head teacher, in this case myself, and several other teachers teaching classes. Thus we hoped to lessen the impact of having a different teacher for each unit. This was the ideal arrangement I thought of to have trainees give a real class to real students and evaluate them.

Before finishing the fifth session, I explained in detail to trainees what week four was going to be like. I explained to them the procedures for the first two classes I taught to the pilot group and their teaching schedule.

Week Four

On the first session of week four I divided trainees into two groups. To pilot groups were formed to meet the training program needs. Each group attended classes with different pilot groups of students. We followed these procedures. First I introduced myself and the trainees to the students. Trainees were introduced as being regular EFL teachers. Each student sat down with a trainee and interviewed him. After that, they introduced each other to the class. This activity gave trainee-teachers and students the opportunity to know each other; it broke the ice and set the scene for better teaching-learning interaction.

I taught the first unit to each pilot group and trainees attended the classes. They observed and participated in them with the students. Through this class participation, trainees helped students feel comfortable and relaxed with the presence of teachers in the classroom with them. It helped a lot when trainees taught their test class because by then the trainee-teachers and students were already familiar with each other.

From unit three on, each trainee-teacher taught his class. When a trainee-teacher taught his class, only he and I remained in the classroom with the students. The other trainees only came on the day they were scheduled to teach their class. This procedure was to have each trainee-teacher feel more comfortable by not having other trainees observing his test class. During the

observation of the trainee-teacher's class, I did not make any interruption at all; I tried to make them feel confident, secure, and comfortable while teaching. After the class, the trainee-teacher and I had a meeting to discuss the class.

If the results were satisfactory, trainee-teachers were then hired. If results were not totally satisfactory, I suggested that the trainee continue on a semester in-service training at the Centro. He would have to observe my classes as well as those of other regular teachers' at the Centro. By the end of the semester he would have to teach a class again. Based on the results of the class and the efforts he had shown during the semester he was then hired.

In both situations, results were considered satisfactory if the trainee demonstrated good teaching performance in the classroom. He had to achieve the minimum goals for each unit or part of the unit. These goals were:

- to have students use the material taught in order to communicate;
- to use student-centered techniques, procedures and materials effectively;
- to cover the teaching steps for each unit, not necessarily in the sequence presented in the book;
- to present variations and creativity in the teaching procedures; and
- to maintain class management.

If the trainee did not show good performance during the training program and did not achieve the goals set for the test class, I invited him to take part in the next training program at the Centro. This was intended to reinforce his teaching abilities and to fulfill the professional requirements I had established in accordance with the institutional needs. In the last training

program I conducted, two trainees failed the proficiency test. One trainee quit after the third session because she did not feel comfortable with the new approaches to teaching. One trainee who participated in the second training program failed it and decided to repeat everything in the third training program. Then she succeeded.

In summary I evaluated training needs through the class they taught and also through the interest, flexibility, creativity and willingness to improve and change they showed during the training program. I observed what they had learned from the program, how able they were to apply the knowledge gained in the program and how well they integrated the notional functional communicative approach to teaching EFL.

To finish the training program, we had a final meeting on session five of the fourth week where the results of their performances were discussed. At the meeting I explained to them the follow-up process at the Centro. This involved class observation by the course coordinator (in this case myself), by the director of courses and their respective assistants. In addition, follow-up would take place through in-service trainings, pedagogical meetings, study days, recycling workshops, peer observation, team teaching with stand-by teachers, seminars, and courses abroad.

I also scheduled trainees for individual meetings with the director of courses. The purposes of those meetings were to have her explain the hiring procedures to trainees, to establish their

work load, class distribution, and to discuss school policies.

Before the end of this last session, I asked the trainees to give an honest personal oral evaluation of the entire training program. Then I gave them an evaluation form to be filled out. No signature was required on the form, but only one trainee did not sign it. Such an attitude indicated how comfortable they felt to express their opinions at the end of the program. It was the result of the open, free, friendly and honest interaction we had in the program.

This detailed description of the program ends chapter two. In addition, I now make three recommendations for changes in this program to help future teacher-trainers who decide to use it. These recommendations were drawn from my personal experience and reactions to the sessions and from trainees' feedback. For example, based on the trainee's final evaluation form of the entire program, it is clear that more time must be given for the peer demonstration. That would make them better be able to accomplish the main goal of the program: to prepare and to succeed in their classroom teaching, and to group as professionals and individuals.

A second suggestion concerns the time schedule. Instead of taking only four weeks to cover the content included in the program five or six weeks would allow each session to be better developed. It would give trainees more time to discuss each topic deeply. The trainer would also have the opportunity to encourage the trainees' participation, due to time flexibility. It would

result in greater understanding of the subject matter being discussed.

Trainees' feedback emphasized the importance of extending the program. They suggested that more time be given to their peer demonstration classes so that everyone had the chance to do one. It helped them develop more confidence and ideas from observing others and from being observed. Trainees suggested longer and more detailed discussion after each peer demonstration. They wanted to have enough practice before going into their test class. Such practices would result in better classroom teaching and improving their self-confidence.

An important specific suggestion refers to the second session of the program in the first week. In that session, body language was introduced to trainees. The purpose was to review their personal assumptions about language which had been examined on the previous session. I used an exercise in which a trainee and I had to role play a conversation between a Brazilian and an American, touching on cultural contrasts between Brazil and the U.S.A.

To start the exercise, I left the room with the trainee to explain to him what we were both supposed to do. While I was out of the classroom, trainees were not assigned any activity. My suggestion would be that before leaving the room, the trainer tell trainees to read the handout about American gestures. They would have to analyse them to try to figure out their meanings and to see if they corresponded to similar gestures in Brazil. Since the handout was to be referred to later, this would be a good way to have trainees start working on it before hand.

Another specific idea to enrich the same exercise would be to invite somebody from the American community in town to take part in it. It would make the demonstration more interesting and realistic. Trainees would then be able to be in contact with a native and that would provide them a more accurate example of American behavior. Their observations and conclusions about American culture would be drawn from a real example. It would help them to better be drawn from a real example. It would help them to better understand the culture and to draw their own conclusions about it.

With these suggestions for changes in this training program I finish chapter two. In chapter three, I describe my conclusions about my work, my reactions to the program and to the changes that occurred within me. They were based on the analysis of some issues with which I was mostly concerned such as teacher selection, myself as a teacher, class observation and the teacher's role in student-centered classes.

CHAPTER THREE

To conclude this paper, I will analyse some issues related to the program which I consider of importance. I consider them of importance because when the program was finished I kept them in mind and felt that I needed to do further analysis on them. Such issues were: the change from teacher-centered to student-centered classes that trainees participated in; my personal reactions as an observer in the program; and the interpersonal interaction which resulted from my selecting, interviewing and training the candidates-to-teach. These issues involve the overlap of the interpersonal, professional and pedagogical aspects of the training.

By examining the change trainees were trying to make from traditionally-structured classes to student-centered classes, I have realized that the teachers do not generally believe that the teaching-learning process in student-centered classes can be effective. They did not think that the students would be able to do the work themselves without depending so much on the teacher.

I also discovered that teachers are afraid of losing their power in the classroom. I understand their feelings because I felt the same way when I went through similar changes. It happened when I was introduced to the communicative way of teaching which was very different from the teacher-centered approach I had been used to. I understand these changes as a painful and demanding process for the teachers, as it was for me.

I remember that I did not want to change my way of teaching because I was afraid of what was new for me. I felt so comfortable teaching the way I used to, that I wondered why change what I have been doing well for so many years? I would have to prepare classes to be able to teach the new approach and that meant time. I would be observed by other teachers and superiors and I was afraid of that, too. But in spite of all these doubts and hesitations, those fears were gone and I felt the time and effort I had put in the new approach were worth it.

Throughout the program I noticed the trainees' changes. It was clear through their attitudes, and the materials and techniques they started using in their demonstrations, that they were willing to change. The changes were also clear when they commented on each other's demonstrations. Sometimes trainees did not even realize those changes were occurring because of their involvement in the activities related to the new approach.

I was happy to see that I had been able to help them change to a certain extent professionally as well as personally. I learned that I had to be patient with their behavior during the change. I had to keep in mind that it was a slow and demanding process, that I was dealing with human beings who needed me to be understanding with them, to help them grow through these changes.

More important, I learned that first of all I had to build the trainees' trust of "the teacher", in this case myself, for teaching-learning to better take place. It was my responsibility to transmit the new ideas to them. I had to be sure of what I was doing so that my attitudes would instill confidence in them. To

do that, I had to keep my teaching behavior consistent, not only in my personal behavior, but also to the teaching materials, techniques, and procedures I was using to teach them. From their observations, they might acquire some of my behavior and use them in their future classroom work if they thought they were appropriate.

Of equal importance, I reminded trainees of their roles as guides and facilitators in this new approach to teaching. They were also to keep in mind that they should allow their students to feel free to discuss the new ideas presented to them, to ask questions about them, to contest them, and to refuse or accept them.

After discussing these factors with the students I found it would be a good idea for the teacher and for the students to make a contract. This contract should reflect their acceptance of the new approach after having discussed it. It would also help students understand that they are going to learn through a different process in which they are responsible for their own learning. Their progress and success would depend mostly on their individual efforts and interest in learning another language, and in lessening their dependence on the teacher.

Reminding trainees of their roles as guides and facilitators allowed me to re-examine myself as a teacher. I had the opportunity to analyse myself while observing the trainees' demonstrations and test classes. This observation took place in both the pre-service and in-service programs that I conducted. I can now understand the different reactions I had while observing

trainees. There were times when I kept thinking, "Why are they not doing things the way I taught them to?" In thinking that way I wanted them to mirror their way of teaching to mine. Yet, I believed this would be detrimental to their professional growth. If I wanted them to grow through changes, I had to give them the opportunity to be creative and present their own ideas in teaching. I realized I have to give trainees the freedom to teach in the way they thought was correct. My job was only to help them keep their teaching directed toward the new approach to teaching.

To make that job possible, class observation was of significant value in my work. I had the opportunity to face reactions from both experienced and new teachers, during the programs I conducted at the Centro. From their reactions, I learned that the experienced teachers were afraid of being observed. They were open enough to tell me that. They were not used to having people observing their classes under the old policies adopted by the schools in general in the country. Personal meetings with those teachers helped to lessen the feelings they had against class observation. The purpose of those meetings was to make them view the observer as someone who wanted to help them do a better job.

Another concern they had about being observed was that they thought the institution wanted to get rid of them. They viewed class observation as a way for the institution to see their faults, thus causing them to be dismissed. This definitely was not so. The intention was to better their teaching abilities. That to be done by drawing from their previous experience, adding

the new concepts of teaching and helping them adapt to the new methodology adopted by the Centro.

On the other hand, the new teachers were more receptive to new ideas and more open to changes. Class observation was of great importance to them. They were always ready to observe other teachers' classes and be observed. They enjoyed discussing their class preparation a lot with me and with other trainees, discussing new ideas on how to teach a certain topic. They felt comfortable about meeting with me after their demonstrations for mutual feedback. I believe such behavior was due to their willingness to get a new job and give new direction to their personal and professional lives. They understood these attitudes would help them better prepare themselves for the test class they had to teach in the end of the program.

Honesty, willingness and dedication on both parts made our professional and interpersonal relationship smooth and amiable. That resulted in great classroom work. The relaxed and open atmosphere they had during the program helped trainees to be prepared to take over their job at the Centro. I am sure such attitudes from trainees and from myself were due to the interaction we had had since the very first contact during the teacher selection interview which I comment on now.

The positive interaction I had with trainees started with my selecting and interviewing them. I learned that such early contact was of great importance both for me and the trainees. It helped diminish tension between us and created better interaction. We had the opportunity to know each other and exchange ideas in a

relaxed and friendly atmosphere. From this experience I learned that by making myself comfortable and relaxed during the interview, by being honest and natural, I helped candidates to feel the same way. Such attitudes facilitated our interaction, integrating our participation during the program and afterwards during class observation while trainees taught their test class.

To conclude, I would like to express my personal feelings about the work I did. It was an invaluable experience for me. When I finished the last program, I had a great sense of accomplishment. I noticed how much I had grown both personally and professionally. Through this growth I became more sensitive toward others, accepting them the way they were. I understood that one cannot force another to change unless he is willing.

The confidence in myself that I gained while conducting these programs helped me become aware of the changes I experienced. It also helps me maintain my awareness of possible future changes I will have to go through.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹The In Touch textbook series (in the bibliography) and the teacher's manual to it is the series adopted by the Centro. It is based on the notional functional approach.
- ²The handout about language I gave trainees was based on the assumptions about language that I wrote for my Approaches Course in the MAT Program, fall 1983.
- ³The techniques about the Silent Way I taught trainees were extracted from Gattegno's Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools, The Silent Way.
- ⁴The illustrated handout about American gestures I gave trainees was extracted from Clark and Moran's The ESL Miscellany.
- ⁵Based on Gattegno's Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools, The Silent Way
- ⁶Ibid
- ⁷I first had the idea to develop this activity from an anecdote Mr. Donald Freeman told at a conference he gave at the Centro, in October 1985.
- ⁸I first saw this activity at a workshop Mr. Donald Occhiuzzo gave at the Centro during the last program I conducted, in June 1986.
- ⁹I adapted this activity from a presentation of shock language Mr. Donald Freeman gave at a conference at the Centro, in October 1985.
- ¹⁰The trainees studied about the notional functional approach through readings I compiled from Finocchiaro and McLean on the notional functional approach, The Functional Notional Approach: From Theory to Practice.
- ¹¹I gave trainees a handout about pair work, extracted from The English Language Teaching Forum, "From Structured Based To Functionally Based Approaches to Language Teaching."

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