

English Connects

Professional development for teachers

Unit 3: Observing Teachers Part 2: Observing Elsie

Participant
Book

Learning Outcomes

- 1 This worksheet has the following aims:
 - A to help us observe Elsie's lesson supportively and critically
 - B to allow us to analyse different activities in Elsie's lessons
 - C to reflect on various teacher procedures and on whether we ourselves would be happy to use them
 - D to form an opinion about the effectiveness of Elsie's lesson and about whether her students seem to have benefitted from the things she asked them to do.

- 2 The video which accompanies this workshop:
 - A shows an edited version of a complete lesson by Elsie who is based in Cameroon.
 - B divides this lesson into stages

You will be asked to:

- identify what Elsie and her students say and do
- compare this with your own practice
- consider your reactions to what you see and hear.

This unit complements the professional practice of 'Taking Responsibility for Professional Development' from the CPD Framework for teachers <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/taking-responsibility>

1 Lead in

1.1



Say whether you do (or would do) these things and how often (put the letters in the right place in the chart for you)

- A Attempting to elicit language from the students before you teach it.
- B Fixing large pieces of paper/card to the board.
- C Having students say 'well done' in chorus and clapping.
- D Teaching questions and answers in the same lesson.
- E Teaching grammatical terminology.
- F Using pictures to prompt language use/practice.

Always	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never

Compare your charts with your colleagues and talk about similarities and differences.

1.2 Teaching grammar



Think about pieces of grammar you (a) enjoy and (b) do not especially enjoy teaching. Why? Make notes in the space below about how you teach them.

I enjoy teaching... 	Because... 	How I teach it:
I don't enjoy teaching... 	Because... 	How I teach it:

Tell each other about the grammar you have chosen, why you have chosen it and how you go about teaching it.

2 Starting the lesson

2.1 Initial observations



As you watch the video, take note on the following questions.

- How does Elsie start here lesson and what does she ask the students to do?
- Does she always stay in the same place in the classroom? Why?
- How does she reward successful answers?

2.2 Reflection



Reflect individually, then discuss in groups:

- How do you use pictures to get your students talking? Why?
- How often do you or your whole class praise a student? Why and when?

3 Introducing the grammar focus for the lesson

3.1 Involving the learners



As you watch the video, take note on the following questions.

- How does Elsie get the questions that she wants her students to focus on?
- Why does she do this?

3.2 Focus on form



What does Elsie want the students to understand about the first element of the questions they have been asking?

3.3 Further focus on form



Watch the next section of the lesson and think about these two questions.

- What are the elements that Elsie asks her students to focus on?
- How does Elsie get students to concentrate on the grammar of the questions she has been teaching?

3.4 Reflection on focus on form



Reflect individually, then discuss in groups:

What are the plusses and minuses of having learners use technical grammar vocabulary (also called meta-language)?

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How much and how often do you get students to describe grammar in meta / technical ways (subject, verb, etc.)? Why?

Notes:

4 Introducing a new element

4.1



Watch the next section of the lesson and think about these three questions.

- What is the new element – or elements - which Elsie brings to the class?
- How does she explain its importance in questions?
- What special uses does she mention for the new element?

5 Focus on meaning

5.1 Guided practice



Watch the next section of the lesson and think about these questions.

- What does Elsie use to help her with this stage of the lesson?
- How do students see whether their classmates are getting the right answer?

5.2 Reflection



Reflect individually, then discuss in groups:

- Do you like Elsie's use of the large sheet of paper here as an alternative to chalk writing on the board? Why?
- Have you done this? What happened?
- Would you do this? Why, Why not?

6 Freer Practice



Watch the next section of the lesson and think about these three questions.

- Why do you think Elsie uses some new pictures?
- How well do you think the students have learnt the new questions?

7 Ending the lesson



Watch the final section. How does Elsie end her lesson?

8 After watching the lesson

8.1 Why does Elsie do certain things in class?



Choose what you think are the reasons (in column B) for the actions Elsie takes (one for each action)?

ACTIONS	REASONS	
A Elsie asks for a summary of the lesson at its end.	1 She has to fill the time somehow.	15 She thinks the labels look nice.
B Elsie elicits the questions from the students (she asks them if they can make the questions before she teaches them).	2 It adds little bursts of energy to the class	16 She thinks this will motivate her students and give them a final 'look' at the language she has been teaching.
C Elsie has students identify the grammar of the questions she is teaching.	3 It rewards good students	17 She thinks this will motivate the students
D Elsie includes frequent bursts of 'clap for her/him'	4 She believes that a knowledge of grammar helps students to learn languages.	18 She wants to remember what she has done.
E Elsie introduces 'how' question only after she has dealt with 'Wh- questions.	5 She doesn't know what she wants to teach.	19 She wants to see what they know and because it is a way of ensuring their cognitive engagement with the lesson focus.
F Elsie moves around the classroom	6 She enjoys reversing the order of the alphabet.	20 She wants students to be able to use the grammar labels in the future.
G Elsie uses a chart with a matching question and answer exercise.	7 She is testing the students to see if they have learnt their lesson.	21 To ensure tight discipline in the class
H Elsie uses a picture of the basketball team etc at the end of the lesson.	8 She thinks 'how' questions are very difficult.	22 To give all students in the room a chance to see an exercise being answered correctly.
J Elsie uses pictures in her lesson	9 She thinks grammar is motivating for students.	23 To practise choral cohesion in the class.
K Elsie writes grammar labels on the board.	10 She thinks it will make things easier if they have already 'mastered' question formation with 'wh-' questions.	24 To provide a context for the language she is teaching.
	11 She thinks it looks pretty.	25 To vary the visual stimulus in the classroom.
	12 She thinks it will help students remember the content of the lesson.	26 To make all the students in the room feel included.
	13 She thinks it will help students who benefit from seeing things which are clearly organised.	
	14 She thinks the athletes in the pictures look amazing	

Compare your answers with your colleagues. Do they agree with you? Find out why/why not and talk about the differences.

8.2 Your reactions



Reflect individually, then discuss in groups:

What do you think of Elsie's use of **(a) pictures**, and **(b) elicitation** in her lesson? Would you/do you do it? What are the advantages and disadvantages in your opinion? Make notes in the space provided and then discuss your answers with your colleagues.

Reasons for using them	
Pictures	
Elicitation	

8.3 The place of grammar in language teaching



Read the following statements and give each one a score of 0 (I don't agree at all) to 5 (I am 100% in agreement) according to your own beliefs.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided
A It is vital for students to be able to name the grammatical elements in a sentence.					
B I always get my students to focus on the grammar of a sentence.					
C People can learn a language – and converse in it – even if they do not know how it is formed grammatically.					
D When I teach, I spend the majority of my time on grammar teaching.					
E The students who do best are the ones who can understand the technical aspects of how a language is constructed.					
F Grammar knowledge is not important. Students can pass tests without it.					
G Being able to explain a grammar point is less important than being able to use the structure.					



Now discuss your scores with your colleagues.

Do they all think the same as you? Explain why you feel as strongly (or weakly!) as you do.

8.4 Reflection on your own teaching



Discuss in groups:

- How explicit do you make your own grammar teaching? What are your reasons for this?
- How much do you use elicitation when you are teaching? Why?
- What other ways of introducing grammar do you use? What are your reasons for that?

9 Explore



The importance of grammar knowledge in language learning and teaching has always been a topic of discussion. In some educational cultures there have been periods where teachers were advised to avoid the mention of grammar completely, whereas in others it is central to the curriculum.




It might be worth considering what some 'advocates of grammar teaching have said and what 'dissenters' think, and that is what this section is designed to do.





Find out as much as you can about the people or topics mentioned in the chart below and make notes about what you find. Then compare you answers with colleagues. Useful links are provided below to help you.






Grammar translation
Audio-lingual methodology
The communicative approach
Teaching 'unplugged'
Acquisition vs learning (Stephen Krashen)






In this unit you observed a complete lesson taught by Elsie from Cameroon, which included a **focus on form** and a **focus on meaning**.

In this section you can follow up on the video by accessing a number of articles, activities, and videos on the BBC and British Council's TeachingEnglish website. These will allow you to explore different approaches (**Grammar Translation**, **Audio-Lingual**, **Communicative Language Teaching** and **Teaching 'Unplugged'**) in more depth, with further ideas, activities and relevant methodology.

Sub-topic:	Title:	Link:	Type of Resource:	Summary:
Grammar Translation	"Translation activities in the language classroom"	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/translation-activities-language-classroom	Article Paul Kaye 	After a short description of Grammar Translation this article looks at objections to using translation and possible benefits for learners and for the teacher. The author goes on to suggest a number of practical translation activities for the classroom.
	"A trip down the memory lane of methodology"	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/a-trip-down-memory-lane-methodology (0:00 – 08:20)	Webinar Chia Suan Chong 	Chia begins her historical survey with a look at Grammar Translation, using a couple of amusing drawings of classroom situations. She talks about positive features of this methodology for some learners.
Audio-lingual methodology	"Drilling 2"	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/drilling-2	Article Julie Tice 	The first part of this article, which you can find in the Explore section of Unit 3, was an introduction to drilling. The second part is a 'how to' guide to a number of drills and drill-like activities that will give students the practice they need to use new language accurately and confidently.
	"A trip down the memory lane of methodology"	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/a-trip-down-memory-lane-methodology (08:20 – 20:20)	Webinar Chia Suan Chong	In this part of the video, which includes a short video clip of a question-and-answer drill, the speaker talks about the history of

	lane of methodology”			Audio-lingual methodology and reminds us of why it may appeal to some learners. NOTE: Chia uses ‘Direct Method’ as an alternative name for Audio-lingual methodology. The Direct Method shared some features with Audio-lingual methodology, and so the two are sometimes put together.
Communicative language teaching	“Find the gap – increasing speaking in class”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/find-gap-increasing-speaking-class	Article Gareth Rees 	This article One of the key principles of Communicative Language Teaching is the idea of the information gap, i.e. a situation where speakers do not share the same information, which creates a reason for communicating. This article looks at different kinds of gaps (information, experience, opinion, knowledge) that can be used to stimulate communication between students working in pairs or groups. The author also provides some useful practical tips for organising these activities.
	“Promoting learner autonomy through communication strategy training”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/promoting-learner-autonomy-through-communication-strategy-training	Video Kathleen M Bailey 	In this interactive talk Professor Bailey looks at some simple strategies that learners can use to develop their ability to participate in spoken interaction. She illustrates these strategies from personal experience as a language teacher and a language learner. and
Teaching ‘unplugged’	“Teaching unplugged”	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBLCdTCnlRU	Video Scott Thornbury 	Most of this lively talk by Scott Thornbury, who started Teaching Unplugged, consists of a demonstration of the approach with a large audience of teachers in Armenia. Scott then

				explains the principles behind it and responds to two important questions raised by the teachers.
	“Teaching unplugged – activities”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-unplugged-activities	Article Stuart Wiffin 	Some ways of initiating conversation in the classroom so you can focus on ‘emergent language’. As the author says, “...the most important part of 'teaching unplugged' for the teacher is not how you generate the emergent language (that is the language that the students produce as they are talking) but what you do with the language.”
	“Dogme: a teacher’s view”	Article Stuart Wiffin  https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/dogme-a-teachers-view	Article Jo Bertrand 	‘Dogme’ was the original name of the ‘back to basics’ approach to teaching based on language produced by learners, which is now known as ‘Teaching Unplugged’. Jo discusses the way her classroom is arranged and how she manages her unusual lessons.
	“Live lesson: dogme” (“Live and unplugged”)	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/live-lesson-dogme (from 03:13)	Video Luke Meddings 	A demonstration lesson by Luke Meddings, co-author of <i>Teaching Unplugged</i> , which shows you how this approach works with language produced by the students. Includes links to Luke’s reflections and a view from the audience.
Acquisition vs. Learning (Stephen Krashen)	“Four strategies for grammar instruction”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/larry-ferlazzo/larry-ferlazzo-four-strategies-grammar-instruction	Article Larry Ferlazzo 	Instead of choosing between acquisition and learning, Larry describes four types of activities that involve aspects of <i>both</i> acquisition <i>and</i> learning.
Teaching grammar	“A trip down the memory lane of methodology”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/a-trip-down-memory-lane-methodology (50:36 – 54:23)	Webinar Chia Suan Chong	In this short section of her talk, Chia looks at the way coursebooks are organised according to grammatical structures to meet students’ and teachers’ expectations. She goes on to

				mention some of advantages of focusing on grammar.
	“Planning a grammar lesson”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/planning-a-grammar-lesson	Article Tanya Cotter 	The writer makes a clear distinction between deductive and inductive approaches to teaching grammar, and then provides a useful guide to PPP – Presentation, Practice, Production
	“Presenting new language”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/presenting-new-language	Article Paul Kaye 	This article also contrasts deductive and inductive presentation of new language, with mini-lesson plans to illustrate both approaches.
Focus on form	“Techniques for form focus after reading”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/techniques-form-focus-after-reading	Article Dave Willis 	This article recommends three techniques for focusing on form from a reading text, which are all engaging activities designed to get learners to pay attention to language form.
Focus on meaning	“Criteria for identifying tasks for TBL”	https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/criteria-identifying-tasks-tbl	Article Jane Willis 	Unlike PPP, Task-based Learning (TBL) is an approach that starts with a focus on meaning before focusing on form. Here Jane Willis contrasts form-focused and meaning-focused activities, and uses an example task to demonstrate criteria for identifying good tasks for TBL.

Answers

- 2.1:** How does Elsie start her lesson and what does she ask the students to do?
 - *Elsie asks her students to look at pictures and say what they can see there.*

Does she always stay in the same place in the classroom? Why?
 - *When students do something good the whole class offers a 'well done' clapping call.*

How does she reward successful answers?
 - *When she is handing out pictures – and at other times – she moves around the classroom. This makes all of the students feel more included in the lesson.*

- 3.1:** How does Elsie get the questions that she wants her students to focus on?
 - *Elsie tries to elicit the questions from the students before she teaches them herself. She asks students to think of questions they can ask about the pictures she has brought with her.*

Why does she do this?
 - *Eliciting questions like this means that students are mentally alert and actively involved in learning.*

- 3.2:** She asks the students to notice that all the questions so far start with a question words starting with *Wh-*

- 3.3:** What are the elements that Elsie asks her students to focus on?
 - *She wants her students to understand the three elements: Question words; auxiliary verb; subject*

How does Elsie get students to concentrate on the grammar of the questions she has been teaching?
 - *She writes up the names of the three elements that she is focusing on above the questions.*

3.4:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They make it easier to explain language and how language is used. • They help students categorise and compartmentalize the mechanics of language and how it works so that they can learn it more easily. The ability to talk about language can help the students' linguistic knowledge and awareness. • Such compartmentalization of language enables a clearer and more linear presentation of it in courses, i.e. syllabuses and course material e.g. coursebooks. • They are part of the discourse of language teaching and learning. To not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unnecessary and can confuse students. • It is exclusionary. It purposely creates a closed discourse community that shuts out those that are not 'in the know'. Education and language learning should be for everyone and not only for the privileged few. • In order to use metalanguage, teachers have to spend a considerable amount of time teaching the metalanguage itself. This is a waste of precious classroom time. • Talking about language is not the same as using a language. Being able to analyse how language works does not

<p>deal with metalanguage in your classroom and teacher training courses might mean exclusion from the discourse community of language teaching and learning. This might cause future problems when one needs to interact and talk about language with peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metalanguage is in most coursebooks and course materials. • Students expect such metalanguage to be used. They most have probably used it in their previous English learning experience and are comfortable with using it. Failure to use metalanguage might even point towards the teacher's lack of expertise. 	<p>mean you can actually speak the language fluently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It places too much focus on grammatical competencies rather than on what is important, i.e. communicative competence. • It is old-fashioned and belongs to the time of grammar translation and grammar syllabi. • It is used by teachers to show off how much they know and how much knowledge they can impart. And teaching today is not about imparting knowledge but about facilitating and effecting learning. • Badly-termed metalanguage can serve to confuse rather than be helpful
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- 4.1:** What is the new element – or elements – which Elsie brings to the class?
 - *Elsie introduced question words and phrases with 'How' (How, how much, how old etc). She got the students to categorize them in terms of cost and number.*

How does she explain its importance in questions?

- *She says that we can still ask questions, even without the Wh- word*

What special uses does she mention for the new element?

- *She starts by focusing on the age of the queen, then she goes on to Date, Number, Cost*

- 5.1:** What does Elsie use to help her with this stage of the lesson?
 - *Elsie has brought in a large piece of paper which she sticks to the board. The questions and answers are mixed up and the students have to match them correctly.*
 How do students see whether their classmates are getting the right answer?
 - *Elsie asks individual students up to the front so that the whole class can see when the questions are correctly matched with the answers.*

- 6:** Why do you think Elsie uses some new pictures?
 - *Elsie uses her new pictures to give students something different – and hopefully interesting – to work with. It is noticeable that they (the students) react positively to the large pictures of the basketball team.*

How well do you think the students have learnt the new questions?

- *The students seem able to ask questions about the new pictures (the flag and the players) with some confidence – although, of course, they still make some mistakes.*

- 7:** She asks, 'Who can remind the class about what we studied today in the classroom?' This is eliciting from the learners what their understanding of the lesson was. Eliciting ensures that you are hearing directly from them what they think they have learned. It is more effective than the teachers telling them what they learned. But it is useful to summarise their answers. This is why she rephrases their answers into 'Today we learned how to ask questions...we must know when to use a question word.'

8.1: A 12, B 19, C 4, D 3, E 13, F 26, G 22, H 16, J 24, K 20

8.3:

	Reasons for using them
Pictures	<p>Humans are visual beings. Images motivate and interest us. Using pictures is an engaging way of contextualising what the teacher wants to focus on. Pictures stimulate language use. Associating visual images with language makes it more memorable.</p>
Elicitation	<p>Engages the students by getting them to bring all their previous language knowledge to the front of their minds. It means that they will be especially focused on the language when the teacher starts introducing it. If the students show that they know the language already, then the teacher can decide to go in a slightly different direction with their lesson. Elicitation is a win-win situation for both teacher and students. However, if elicitation simply isn't working, then it is best to abandon it. You can't get blood out of a stone!</p>

