

# Rationale for concentrating on teaching of reading strategies



Becoming a teacher is a complex process of change and development not only in terms of behaviour but also in cognition, affect and knowledge (Calderhead, 1990). Moreover, as a language teacher, the importance of keeping your language skills and classroom methods up to date is essential. Thus, attending an in-service training course may hold a significant key to solving a myriad of obstacles facing teacher's development (Day, 1999; Craft, 2000; Sugrue, 2001; Hammadou, 2004; Lee, 2007).

### **Why I chose this format for the workshop?**

Considering that “ teachers appear to be allergic to theory, especially when it is delivered in the lecture mode” (Kouraogo, 1987, p. 173), the workshop is designed as a communicative interaction between the trainer and the teachers who are supposed to act as students in a normal classroom environment.

As Kouraogo(1987, p. 173) maintains “ teachers consistently ask for practical tips and ready-made usable materials as soon as they return to their classrooms” and it is the trainer's intended .... to show teachers' how ineffective teaching may become if learners are not taught explicitly how to use reading strategies to perform better.

While subscribing to Hayes' opinion that “ training/development sessions should value participants' existing knowledge, it is the role of the teacher trainer ” to make these theories explicit during the course (Wright, 1990, p. 92). In practice, this means that sessions should give participants an opportunity to talk about their perceptions of the teaching-learning process, and provide guidance in understanding its theoretical underpinning.

## **What am I aiming at in terms of teacher cognition and their instructional practice?**

The training programme is based on my belief that an awareness, knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects of language and language learning theory will enhance the chances for the language teacher to adopt a more effective methodology and promote students' effective learning .

Similarly, Ellis (1986, p. 92) emphasizes the idea that

**“ the practice of actual teaching can be improved by making teachers aware of the options open to them and the principles by which they can evaluate these alternatives”.**

I assume that in-service teachers experience a certain level of comfort “ with the teaching strategies they have previously employed – often for many years – and see no real reason to alter them” (Adams and Chen (1981).

Therefore in-service training is a good opportunity to help teachers reflect upon their teaching practices and make them aware of their teaching weaknesses and strengths. Upgrading teachers' knowledge on the chosen topic as well as assessing and reviewing their own teaching role in the light of changes in research is another aim of the teacher trainer.

Why I chose the topic – reading strategies?

The main arguments in support of my choosing this topic for the training programme are manifold. Firstly, the scarcity of “ studies on investigating teachers' beliefs in the area of second language reading instruction have indicated an unclear picture of teachers' belief construct in teaching reading”( Chou, 2008, p. 192). However, making the teachers aware of their

consequent instructional practices may reshape their knowledge about teaching reading and align their practice to the research.

The second point is a practical one. The effectiveness of teaching reading is closely related to reading-related strategies and strategy-training. As (Singhal, 2001) suggests research in the area have found that “ strategy training leads to improved reading performance”. Her view is reinforced by Wellingham (2007, p. 39) who emphasizes that “ strategy instruction improves comprehension”. Therefore, the teacher’s role is to maximize the students’ potential reading ability by helping them use reading strategies so as they become fluent and efficient readers.

The third point is determined by the context in which I teach and the target audience of the workshop. The question whether teachers develop reading skills in their classroom may be answered negatively if we consider the result of the questionnaire that I administered to my target audience.

As a result, discovering the best methods and techniques for achieving fluent reading with adequate comprehension, and identifying what techniques or processes the learners may use becomes a prerequisite of this workshop.

### **Why I chose these activities?**

Taking into consideration that “ participants usually bring a wealth of ideas and experience to in-service sessions”( Hayes, p. 9) and the fact that it is an awareness raising session, the activities have been chosen to ... with the above mentioned reasons.

Student teachers have a rich store of initial knowledge and beliefs about

teaching and learning (Nisbett and Ross, 1980), and these beliefs are mainly shaped by their prior learning experiences (Lortie, 1975). In the present study, student teachers are conceptualised in this way, and thus it aimed to identify sources of their initial beliefs

In the first part of the session, participants are briefly introduced to the topic of the

Then, they are invited to respond to some given texts and share ideas with their peers.

Concept Mapping- Morine-Deshimer (1993), Artiles, Mostert, and Tankersley (1994), and Winitzky and Kauchak (1995).

It is the view of Armour-Thomas (1989) that teachers' thought processes influence their judgements, decisions and practices. Therefore, attempting to uncover teachers' thoughts for elicitation of mental processes in research on teacher thinking are concept mapping. Choosing this method, will enable me to examine participants' understanding of the topic and investigate the influences of particular components of a teacher education course on student teachers' knowledge (Calderhead, 1990).

As well as this, it will be useful in revealing gaps, misconceptions, and the degree of sophistication of their conceptualisations.

## **Presentation of the training programme**

This training programme consists of 6 interrelated theoretical and practical workshops to be attended by EFL/ ESL in-service teachers with a special interest in teaching reading, and who are willing to explore the potential benefits of exploring the reading process in more depth.

Acquiring practical and theoretical skills will be taught in interactive and student-centred workshops, focussing on the participants' personal input while attending the training session:

1. an introductory session to shed light on the reading process in L1 and L2 including types of reading, different theoretical approaches to teaching reading- 2 hours
2. teaching and using effective reading strategies - 2 hours
3. understanding and evaluating reading teaching materials and their aims while focusing on selecting materials to motivate students and to improve their reading skills- 4 hours
4. assessing reading and designing a reading task- 4 hours
5. a practical session which offers each participant the possibility of choosing a certain type of reading and to explore it in more depth in terms of efficient classroom activities or as Clair (1995) ironically emphasizes " Give me stuff. Give me a goody bag. You can use this with your fourth grade students who don't speak English. I will use it" (p. 191). - 4 hours

6. evaluation of the workshop and reflective feedback on teachers' beliefs- 2 hours

Prior to attending the training programme, each teacher answered a questionnaire whose results will be used during the training sessions. In addition, the training programme will be led entirely by one trainer so as any changes in teachers' beliefs can be observed and evaluated. At the end of the training programme, each participants will receive an observation sheet containing information about the changes he/she might undergo.

## **Presentation of the workshop about teaching reading strategies**

The objectives of this two-hour training session are to improve the expertise of in-service EFL teachers in relation to teaching reading strategies and dissipate some of the misunderstandings that hamper effective and efficient classroom practice.

### **Aims of the training session**

To raise awareness of advantages and disadvantages of different types of reading strategies

To help teachers begin to develop competent

To highlight the role of reading strategies training in reading comprehension

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this session teachers are expected

To distinguish between effective and ineffective reading strategies

To select or identify the best reading strategies in order to help the learners gain language knowledge

To decide on appropriate ways of encouraging effective reading

Workshop outline

Task

Activity

Objective

Duration

Process

Materials

Notes

Welcome, introduction, session outline

To activate learners' schemata

5 minutes

Powerpoint presentation- 1 slide

Exploring experience

problem-solving activity

To reflect upon the use of reading strategies

5 minutes

copies of texts

Concept Mapping

to examine the structure of student

teachers' knowledge and to investigate the

20 minutes

Participants are asked to brainstorm about reading strategies.

After having produced a list of terms (i. e.

concepts) they are then asked to arrange them and demonstrate their connections,

and on some occasions label what these relationships are. The concept map

eventually produced is thought to represent participants' understanding of the

topic.

The doing of the activity and, implicitly the reflection on the process itself hopefully

triggered a certain amount of learning.

3-2-1 Strategy 3 things you learned 2 interesting things you discovered 1 question that you still have

To review issues from the workshop and to get feedback from the activities

20 minutes

Individual response to the task

Table format 3-2-1

Awareness raising