



## CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

*CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.*

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### Improving Classroom Teaching

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There are many kinds of information that teachers can collect to help them deal with their classroom problems. Some information can provide insight on what teachers and students actually do in the class. Students' test scores and their assignments provide this kind of information. Other kinds of information provide insights on what teachers and students feel or believe. Questionnaires and student and teacher journals can provide this kind of information.

#### **Lesson plans**

Lesson plans describe what teachers plan to do in a class; what they actually do, of course, could be quite different. What kinds of classroom problems can lesson plans help to solve? This depends to a large extent on how detailed the lesson plans are. Imagine that a teacher believes that a good deal of time is wasted in changing from one class activity to another. Students tend to talk at these times and hence, not pay attention. To begin, the teacher might look at her lesson plans to see what kind of planning she has done to make smooth transitions between activities. If she finds that she has done very little planning in this regard, she might use her lesson plans to consider alternate ways of shifting from one classroom activity to another.

Lesson planning can also involve reflection after the lesson has occurred. In this case, reflective teachers examine how they handled a particular aspect of the lesson they have just taught. For example, if teachers are concerned about how they handle transitions between activities, they could complete a lesson planning reflection sheet like the one shown below after each lesson.

How did I indicate the stages of the lesson I just taught?

- Paused
- Said something to introduce the next activity
- Checked completion of previous task
- Gained everyone's attention
- Introduced new material
- Changed position (e.g., sitting/standing)
- Moved furniture
- Indicated time (e.g., "You've got 5 minutes to...")
- Other

Is there any other way I could have made the transition from one stage to the next even smoother? (Adapted from Pak, 1986, pp. 9-10)

## Teaching Logs and journals

Teaching logs are objective notes on teaching events. They generally describe the goals of a classroom activity, the participants, the procedures, the materials, and the outcomes. Teachers can use the logs to make a record of what happened in a particular class. Logs are most useful when they are written immediately after a class so that teachers can recall and record as many of the details of the class as possible. Because there are so many details that could be recorded, it is best to focus on particular aspects of a lesson in a log. For example, teachers could decide to deal primarily with describing how students interact during groups work tasks, recording such things as who participates, what language errors are made, and how adequately students complete the task.

Teaching or student journals are regular accounts of teaching or learning experiences. They can include personal feelings, reactions, and reflections on particular classroom experiences. Teachers, for example, could keep a journal in which they reflect on their personal reactions to their lessons after every class. Students could be asked so make journal entries several times a week. These entries could be quite unstructured in that students merely relate their personal reactions to any classroom activity. Or the journal entries could be more structured so that students react to a particular aspect of the class such their reaction to the reading assignments or the group tasks.

Teaching journals are a helpful way for teachers to identify and reflect on their own personal teaching concerns. Of course, it is possible to combine teaching logs, which are objective descriptions, and journal entries. In this case, for example, teachers could keep a notebook like the following.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description of class activities</u>	<u>Personal reactions to what happened</u>
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Lesson plans, logs and journals then are all good ways for teachers to reflect on their teaching and to consider ways to make every class more productive for themselves and their students.

## References

Pak, J. (1986). *Find Out How You Teach* Adelaide, Australia: National Curriculum Resource Centre.

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