

The Teacher Trainer – Back Articles

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In the back articles archive on this website you will find a jargon generator. It appeared originally in the Spoof Page in Volume One Number Two and poked fun at the amount of jargon used in EFL. For people entering the field it is less of a joke! In the following article Sara Walker showed how she gets round the problem in Brazil.

Dealing with EFL Terminology

By Sara Walker

A practical exercise in negotiating meanings for Teacher Training Courses (TTC).

Trainees embarking on their first-ever TTC may well feel threatened by the professional jargon of ELT. The problem is likely to become acute if the trainee-group includes more experienced teachers as well as novices. Clearly, time spent on negotiating the meaning of key terms will be a good investment for trainees and their trainers. The activity described here produced excellent results.

Diana Fried-Booth (1986) presents a simple idea for exploiting vocabulary through what she terms a vocabulary monitor. This is a display board, made by the students, containing cards with a key word or phrase on one side and a definition on the other. The board can be displayed on the classroom wall for students to consult for as long as required. We decided to use this idea for ELT terms.

Since our trainees had been selected a month before the TTC began, it was possible to give them a fairly demanding list of pre-course reading. When the bibliography was issued, a four-page list containing around 60 ELT terms was also handed out. Trainees were asked to write down a brief definition of each term before the beginning of the 4-week intensive TTC. They could arrive at their definitions by any means they liked, including discussions with experienced teachers, although we assumed that most meanings could be gleaned from intelligent reading of the bibliography.

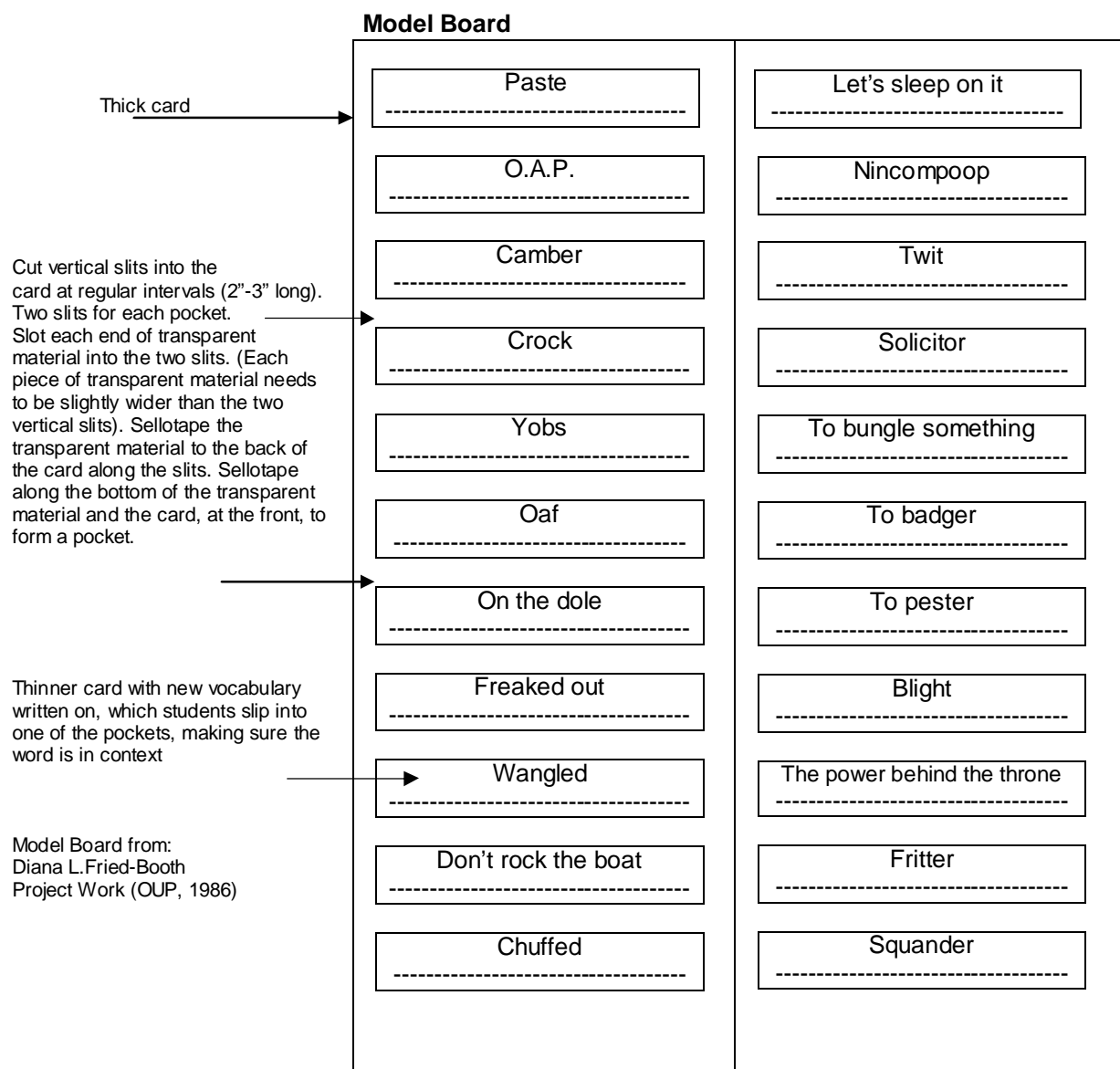
On the second morning of the TTC, trainees received the following instructions:

Independent British Institute

1987 TTC Making a Terminology Board

- 1) Divide into 4 approximately equal groups. Each group will be assigned ONE page of the Terminology Chart in the TTC Bibliography file.
- 2) Decide among you which definition or definitions you want to use for each term. If necessary, check the definitions given by other groups or use dictionaries. DON'T run to your Friendly Teacher Trainers until all other options have been exhausted!
- 3) Decide how you are going to make your terminology Board (by adapting the diagram below.) Then assign the work to different members of the group (those who will make the board, those who will make out the definition cards it will contain, who (if anyone) will check spelling, English etc.

REMEMBER: WORK FAST. YOUR AIM IS TO FINISH YOUR BOARD BY THE END OF THE CLASS.



Each group of trainees was given two large sheets of cardboard, scissors, coloured felt-tipped pens, glue, polythene bags, sheet of stiff card of a smaller size, sellotape and crepe tape. With this equipment, some adaptation of the Fried-Booth model had to be devised. Dictionaries were freely available, including the invaluable Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Longman, 1985), which none of the trainees had seen before. The four groups worked in separate rooms on the design of their boards, but consultations between groups on the meanings of terms were positively encouraged. Three trainers were in the background, to be called on in moments of crisis.

At the end of a 90-minute session, three out of the four groups had already designed and largely made their terminology boards. The fourth group, who had been given the 'psychology' section of the terminology list and had had greater difficulty in reaching agreed definitions, were a little behind the others. All four groups were asked to finish their boards in their own time, so that they would be ready for presentation to the class the following morning.

On the next two days, the 90-minute theory input sessions were fully taken up with the presentation by the trainees of their terminology boards, which differed widely in design and showed considerable

creativity. Meanings were re-negotiated by the whole class and where necessary, definitions were corrected or amended, by general consent.

The activity produced a range of benefits. The trainees (and the trainers) rapidly discovered where to look for practical skills (design, and accurate eye for visual detail, nice handwriting, etc.) and where the intellectual strengths of the trainee-group lay. Both types of skill were called into regular use as the course developed. In addition, the trainees had worked out for themselves the meanings of a whole series of ELT terms, ranging from the basic to the more abstruse.

As always, when an activity can be seen to lead to a relevant end-product, motivation and the sense of achievement among participants were extremely high. The trainers, meanwhile, had been given a valuable opportunity, over three trainee-centred sessions, to make preliminary observations about the skills and personalities of all those involved in the TTC.

Biographical note

Sara Walker had been involved in ELT in Brazil for the last twenty years. She began her career as a French teacher, but subsequently took an M.A. in Latin American Studies and decided to work in Brazil. In 1972 she became a co-founder of the Independent British Institute, Brasilia, together with a group of Teacher-Directors who believe that educational aims should take precedence over administrative considerations in the running of an ELT Institute. IBI now has a teaching staff of 62 and over 5000 students.

(1) The list of terms issued with the pre-course reading:

TERMINOLOGY CHART

As you read the articles, complete this chart with a brief definition of the terms on the list. Use a dictionary, talk to experienced teachers or use any resource at your disposal to produce your definitions.

(On the I.B.I. worksheet a space is left after each word for teachers to fill in definitions. For space considerations the chart is here represented as a simple list.)

Terminology chart page 1

A. Language/linguistics

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. language | 7. syntax | 13. appropriacy |
| 2. a language | 8. semantics | 14. structures |
| 3. L1 | 9. phonology | 15. functions |
| 4. L2 | 10. phonetics | 16. notions |
| 5. lexis | 11. discourse | |
| 6. morphology | 12. register | |

Terminology chart page 2

B. Psychological concepts

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. behaviourism | 6. cognitive factors | 11. humanistic principles |
| 2. deep structure | 7. monitoring | 12. awareness techniques |
| 3. learning | 8. learning strategies | 13. communicative competence |
| 4. acquisition | 9. motivation | 14. communicative performance |
| 5. affective factors | 10. alienation | 15. feedback |

Terminology chart page 3

C. General methodology

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. a method | 7. needs analysis | 13. peer correction |
| 2. an approach | 8. assessment/evaluation | 14. contextualisation |
| 3. a technique | 9. self-assessment | 15. (in) lockstep |
| 4. the four skills | 10. an error | 16. authentic materials |
| 5. receptive skills | 11. a mistake | |
| 6. productive skills | 12. interference (from L1 to L2) | |

Terminology chart page 4

D. Specific methodology

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. drilling | 7. role play | 13. EFL |
| 2. choral work | 8. a simulation | 14. TEFL |
| 3. pair work | 9. an information gap exercise | 15. TESL |
| 4. group work | 10. intensive reading | 16. TESOL |
| 5. a substitution drill | 11. extensive reading | 17. T |
| 6. a transformation drill | 12. skimming/reading for gist | 18. S1, S2, /SS |