Teachers Helping Teachers:
Peer Observation for Professional Development

Heather Benucci
September 10, 2014
Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinars – Course 14
Close your eyes....

- Imagine the last time your teaching was observed
- What words and short phrases come to mind?
Word association – Observation

- Performance Evaluation
- Nervous
- Intruded upon
- Mandatory
- Power difference
- Artificial
- Uncomfortable

DON'T PANIC

- Developmental
- Collaborative
- Reflection
- Supportive
- Improved Learning
- Mutual Respect
- Team-building
Our mission today!

- Examine types of classroom observation
- Explore peer observation
  - Goals
  - Challenges
  - Process
- Explore a resource that can enhance observation skills
  - *Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action*
Observation types

- **Evaluative** - performance, accreditation
- **Performance management** - in response to complaints or performance issue
- **Teacher training** - instructive
- **Peer** - cooperative, developmental
- **Self** - using video or audio data
- **Recorded** - videos of other teachers
Observation types

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Peer Observation

- Teachers observing other teachers for professional development

- Both the observer and observed examine their beliefs, attitudes, and practices

- Usually
  - Confidential
  - Voluntary
Peer Observation: Goals

- Designed to
  - Spark collaboration
  - Encourage self-reflection and self-awareness
  - Challenge assumptions
  - Foster experimentation
  - Stimulate curiosity
  - Improve learning outcomes

- Not to
  - Judge others
  - Evaluate or review for advancement
Peer Observation Challenges

- **Observer**
  - Relationship management
  - Setting aside own biases and beliefs
  - Finding an observation focus

- **Observed**
  - Threat to identity and experience
  - “Intrusion” in space
  - Making observation process relevant to daily teaching

- **Both**
  - Time
  - Experience observing and giving feedback
The Peer Observation Process

1. Pre-Observation Meetings
2. Observation of Lessons
3. Post-Observation Meetings
4. Action!

Pre-observation meeting

- Teacher and observer meet before the class
- Teacher informs observer about class level and lesson objectives
- Observed teacher sets the observation focus
- Discuss observation etiquette
- Agree on when the post-meeting will take place
Etiquette – What do you see?
Observation Etiquette

- Be discreet!
  - Sit in the back of the room or to the side
  - Calm, pleasant demeanor

- Focus solely on the observation

- Observe the entire lesson or agreed upon segment

- In general, do not participate in the lesson

- Take thorough notes for the post-observation meeting
What to observe?

- Number and type of student questions
- Teacher display and referential questions
- Interaction patterns (T --> S, S --> T, S <-> S)
- Wait time
- On-task time in group work
- Teacher use of praise
- Error treatment
- ...or whatever the observed teacher asks for
Data collection tools

- Forms
- Tallies and checklists
- Classroom maps / diagrams
- Audio* 
- Video* 
- Photo*
Teacher: ____________________________________________
Observer: __________________________________________
Date__________ Time__________ Class/Level
Lesson focus / objectives ____________________________________________
Observation focus areas ____________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
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Overall Comments:

Reflection notes:

Add to this column at end of lesson and before post-observation meeting
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:05</td>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>Ss were out of their chairs and there was lots of STT</td>
<td>Great job. Fun &amp; interactive!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:05-8:16</td>
<td>Pre-Reading</td>
<td>T asks schema-building question, Ss are silent. T answers question</td>
<td>Perhaps more wait time needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:16-8:40</td>
<td>Reading Jigsaw Activity</td>
<td>T told Ss to get into groups, Ss didn’t move. T repeated more loudly, Ss moved</td>
<td>Voice too low? Need to speak up or model directions and activity</td>
</tr>
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<td>T circulated during group work</td>
<td>Great monitoring! Is this something I could do more of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T told Ss to get into second groups, Ss did better this time</td>
<td>Why do you think Ss followed instructions better this time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:40-8:50</td>
<td>Check Jigsaw Answers</td>
<td>One S from each group reports their answers. T asks other groups to raise their hands if they agree</td>
<td>Great job – S-centered activity! 😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:50-end of class</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>T writes free writing prompt based on the reading on board. Some Ss stared out the window; others seemed engaged.</td>
<td>Do Ss understand the task?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most teacher learning takes place during this stage. Both teachers... are respectful. They offer opinions in a kind and constructive way. They should feel like they have learned something new about themselves. They can develop action plans and goals.
Post-Observation Meeting Prep

- Feedback should be prompt

- Observer
  - Review notes
  - List questions and comments
  - Reflect on own practice

- Observed Teacher
  - Reflect on lesson
  - What went well?
  - What might you change?
Giving feedback

- Be clear and use specific examples
- Use “I” and “me” statements
  - I felt you were speaking a little quickly at the end.
  - It seemed to me that students were unsure what to do after you gave the instructions.
- Ask questions
  - I noticed the students always worked in the same pairs. Can you tell me about your strategies for grouping students?
- Suggestion Sandwich
  - Give a compliment, a suggestion, and end with a compliment
### Giving feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t Say</th>
<th>Do Say</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You talk too quietly.</td>
<td>I noticed some of the students didn’t seem to hear your instructions. Perhaps you could speak up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t give the students enough time to answer your questions.</td>
<td>Did you notice how many students answered your questions? Do you think they might need more time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action

- Make the time you invest count
- Set concrete goals and follow up
- Consider
  - Adjusting lesson plans
  - Trying a new technique
  - Sharing lessons learned at a training event
  - Conducting an action research project
Get Involved with Peer Observation

- Give a presentation to administrators and colleagues on peer observations
- Form a peer observation community of practice
- Coordinate peer observation schedules
- Cover a class to support another’s observation
- Start a collection of observation worksheets and tools
- Watch “Peer Observation” in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Successful Practices From Around the World* – Unit 13
Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action

A video-based professional development resource for teachers of English as a Foreign Language

A new, FREE resource from the American English team!
Shaping: From Observation to Action

13-unit EFL professional development tool

- 11 full-length class videos + 2 shorter videos
- Viewing guide for each video
- Practical supplemental resources
- Glossary
- Sample responses
- Video transcripts
Very Young Learners – Primary Part 1 (3 videos)

Young Learners – Primary Part 2 (4 videos)

Teens – Secondary Part 3 (3 videos)

Young Adults & Adults Part 4 (3 videos)
The Observation to Action Approach

Observe
Reflect
Act
Adapt
Evaluate
Using *From Observation to Action*

- Use in groups with a facilitator or trainer for multiple perspectives
- Be courteous during discussions
- Keep an open mind
- Be creative
  - Complete units in any sequence
  - Use all or parts of units to meet your objectives
  - View videos as many times as needed, all or in part
Principles of Written English

College Writing 2.1x MOOC

Are you or someone you know an English language learner looking to become better at academic writing? If so, the MOOC “Principles of Written English” is a great place to start. This 5-week online course begins September 17th and is open to anyone interested in participating.

Teach
We offer resources for students of all levels

Learn
Improve your English and learn about culture
Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action

Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action is a series of video-based training materials for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. These materials provide the opportunity for teachers to observe 13 full-length videos of real classes and guide them to evaluate the teaching practices, adapt the materials and techniques to suit their own teaching needs, act upon the insights gained by implementing new ideas, and reflect on these ideas to develop a variety of pedagogical skills.

Downloads

Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action

Text (PDF)
Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action

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Format: Text

http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/shaping-way-we-teach-english-observation-action
Shaping The Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action
by American English • 14 videos • 9,096 views • 6 hours

"Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action" is a teacher training resource that contains 13 units that explore 11 full-length class videos and two shorter videos about alternative assessment. The units provide hands-on... more

1. Unit 1: Primary: Very Young Learners
   American English
   36:17

2. Unit 2: Primary: Very Young Learners
   American English
   30:24

3. Unit 3: Primary: Very Young Learners
   American English
   18:44

4. Unit 4: Primary: Young Learners
   American English
   35:56

5. Unit 5: Primary: Young Learners
   American English
   34:47

6. Unit 6: Primary: Young Learners
   American English
   23:28

7. Unit 7: Primary: Young Learners
   American English
   31:25

8. Unit 8: Secondary: Teens
   American English
   36:22

9. Unit 9: Secondary: Teens
   American English
   35:33
Video Viewing Guides

- Provide a structure for conducting observations
- Emphasize local applications and adaptation
- Encourage reflection and action

Beginning
1. Warm-up (0:08-2:32): Describe the first activity in the lesson. What are the students wearing? What are the students and teachers outside of the "boat" doing? Why are they doing that?
2. Teacher’s Role (0:08-2:32): What does the teacher do during the role-play (drama)?
3. Role-playing (0:08-2:32): The class is studying the Pilgrims’ journey to a new land. How does this role-play make the topic more meaningful for students? Why do you think the teachers use this activity to introduce the project?
4. Learning Styles: What kinds of learners do you think would like this kind of role-playing activity the most? Why? What do you imagine they may be thinking as they participate in the role-play (see the picture below)?

Middle
5. Content-based Instruction: What kinds of language are the students learning while studying the content material (the story of the Pilgrims)? How do they learn the language if they are not studying grammar rules?
6. Question and Answer (2:55-8:28): List examples of the questions the teacher uses during the Question and Answer activity that comes after the role-play. Where are the students sitting during this activity? How does this location relate to the lesson’s theme?
7. Critical Thinking (2:55-8:28): During the Question and Answer activity, the teacher asks students to compare their journey to the United States to the Pilgrims’ journey. How do these open-ended questions compare to comprehension questions with yes/no answers? Which type of questions encourages critical thinking?
8. Personalization (2:55-8:28): It can be difficult for young learners to relate to the content in history lessons. How do the teachers personalize the discussion to make it more relevant for the children?
9. Feedback (2:55-8:28): During the Question and Answer session, how does the teacher provide feedback after a student answers a question?

Ending
10. PBL and Group Work (9:25-34.34): After the Question and Answer session, the class completes a Project-Based Learning task. The project’s basic steps are listed in the left-hand column of the chart below. Add more details about what the students and teachers do in the middle column. In the Rationale column on the right, add a possible reason for doing this step (that is, what is the value of this step?). [Hint: You may want to think back to the “Video Focus” items and/or Glossary Spotlight terms listed on the first page of this unit]. You can record your answers on a separate sheet of paper.
Unit 7 — Video Viewing Guide

Profile

School level: Primary: Young Learners
Ages: 9–10 years old
Language level: Intermediate
Setting: United States, bilingual classroom (English and Spanish)

Pedagogical Content

Video focus:
- Integrated language skills
- Managing group work
- Classroom management techniques
- Giving effective instructions
- Making effective transitions
- Using visual aids to support grammar and vocabulary

Summary:
This class is one in a series of several lessons on the topic (content area) of sockeye salmon. The teacher has organized the room and the integrated skills activity to encourage collaboration between the students. The students respond to questions and tasks, while the teacher deals with error correction in a variety of ways. She fills in a brightly colored chart with the information they discuss. Students move to another part of the room to chant as a group using material from the lesson.

Video length: 31 minutes

Key Terms In this Unit

Glossary spotlight: *Glossary spotlight terms appear in bold the first time they are used in this unit.*
- Chant
- Classroom management
- Collaborate, collaborative learning
- Elicit, elicitation
- Integrated language skills
- Transition, transition techniques
- Visual aid
1. Activate! Warm-up Activity
2. Pre-viewing Questions
3. Facts-based Observation
4. Focus Questions: A Closer Look
5. Discussing Alternatives
6. Reflecting and Adapting
7. Action Plan and Further Reflection
1. Activate! Warm-up Activity

- Relates to the video focus areas
- Asks viewers to use previous knowledge and experience
  - Brainstorming
  - Visualization or drawing
  - Activity or game simulation and analysis

- Get into groups of 3-4.
- Choose a topic/theme from your curriculum.
- Brainstorm as many types as realia as you can – you must be able to bring these items to class!
- When your group is done, discuss how your realia examples could be used in vocabulary instruction.

(Unit 2)
2. Pre-viewing Questions

- Small-group or whole-group discussions linked to video focus areas
- Individual reflection

- What **classroom management** challenges do you experience in the classroom? If you do not teach young learners, what classroom management challenges might a primary teacher experience?
- What kinds of classroom management techniques can teachers of young learners use?

(Unit 7)
3. Facts-based Observation

- Viewers make notes on
  - Steps / stages
  - Interactions
  - Environment

- Record facts, avoid making judgments

Abbreviated note-taking language:
- T tells Ss that each group has a “salmon expert”
- T points to yellow chart at front – animals already on chart (bear, vole), salmon is next

(Unit 7)
3. Facts-based Observation

- Your turn! Prepare to observe:

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Focus: Classroom management (Unit 7)
4. Focus Questions: A Closer Look

- Viewers answer observation-based questions
  - Beginning
  - Middle
  - End
  - Objectives

**Managing Group Work** (0:19-11:24): The teacher poses one question at a time to the class. What phrase does she use to get everyone discussing and answering each question? How does she get their attention to bring the class back together?

**Classroom Management-Calling on Students** (1:03-1:06, 1:48-1:52, 2:02-2:05, and other times): What system does the teacher use to call on students to answer questions?
5. Discussing Alternatives

- More than one way to approach any situation
- What alternatives can you come up with?

Calling on Students: What are other ways to get different students to answer questions?

(Unit 7)
6. Reflecting and Adapting

- What did you learn from the observation?
- What could you adopt or adapt?

**Classroom Management and Transitions:** This teacher uses a variety of classroom management techniques to make smooth transitions, to draw the students’ attention, and to manage student behavior.

- Have you tried any of these techniques in your classroom?
- If so, which ones?
- If not, which might you like to try?
- How could you incorporate or adapt these classroom management techniques in your own classes?

(Unit 7)
### 7. Action Plan and Further Reflection

- Plan a lesson that incorporates the video focus items
- Try all or part of your lesson and reflect again

#### Lesson Plan Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Name/Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description of Students</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson Information:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Objectives — Students will be able to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific skills/content focus:</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does this lesson fit in with the previous and next lessons?</td>
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<table>
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<th>Assessment:</th>
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<th>Notes:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-class preparation</td>
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<th>Lesson Evaluation:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What do you think the students actually learned? How do you know?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What parts were most successful/least successful? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Did you finish the lesson on time? If not, why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What changes (if any) will you make in your teaching and why (or why not)?</td>
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## Supplemental Materials

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<tr>
<td>Graphic Organizer: Brainstorming</td>
<td>This blank graphic organizer also can be used to support brainstorming in the classroom. Teachers can provide copies of this graphic organizer or reproduce it on the chalkboard during class. Participants will use this graphic organizer in the <em>Activate! Warm-Up Activity</em> section in Unit 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sockeye Salmon: Reading Expert Worksheet</strong></td>
<td>This worksheet includes the reading passage used in the Unit 7 video; it also includes space where “reading experts” or other students can draw pictures or make notes to remember unfamiliar words. Participants may choose to use or adapt this resource when creating a lesson plan in the <em>Action Plan and Further Reflection</em> section in Unit 7.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Habitat” Chant</td>
<td>This is one of the chants used in the Unit 7 video. The chant handout includes space where students can draw pictures to illustrate the verses of the chant. Participants may choose to use or adapt this resource when creating a lesson plan in the <em>Action Plan and Further Reflection</em> section in Unit 7.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I Can Spell” Chant</td>
<td>This handout includes an illustrated version of one of the chants used in the Unit 7 video. Participants may choose to use or adapt this resource when creating a lesson plan in the <em>Action Plan and Further Reflection</em> section in Unit 7.</td>
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...plus a collection of online *English Teaching Forum* articles!
Graphic Organizer: Brainstorming

**Instructions:** Write the main topic in the center circle below. Record all of your related ideas in the circles around the topic. Make more idea “branches” by adding circles and lines as needed. You can use text, drawings, or other symbols to represent your ideas.

```
Topic:
```
Sockeye Salmon: Reading Expert Worksheet

Class: Sockeye salmon are bony fish.

Habitat: The sockeye lives in freshwater rivers and streams for the first part of its life. It then migrates to the ocean, where it lives most of its life. It returns to freshwater at the end of its life to lay eggs.

Food: The sockeye salmon feeds mainly upon zooplankton. It also eats insects.

Why threatened or endangered: Most populations of sockeye salmon are endangered because of erosion caused by mining and logging in forests. The dirty runoff can pollute the gravel bedding the salmon needs for laying eggs, and can kill the insects it eats.

Importance to forests: Salmon are an important part of the food chain, providing food to bears and large birds of prey. They also bring nutrients from the ocean to the streams and rivers.

Interesting facts: Salmon travel thousands of kilometers and use their sense of smell to help guide them home when returning from the ocean.
"Habitat" Chant

Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Have to have a habitat... to carry on!

Well, the forest is a habitat, a very special habitat.
It's where the tallest trees are at, it's where a bear can scratch her back.
It keeps the earth from rolling back, prevents erosion, that's a fact.
The forest is a habitat that... we all depend on!

Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Have to have a habitat... to carry on!

Well, the tree is a habitat, a very special habitat.
The roots are where the mice are at, it's where the birds can sing and quack.
When it dies it's still a home, a place that insects call their own, that's a fact.
The tree is a habitat that... we all depend on!

Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Habitat, habitat, have to have a habitat,
Have to have a habitat... to carry on!

Well, the river is a habitat, a very special habitat.
It's where the freshest water's at, for people, fish, and wild cats.
But if the people dump their waste, so many creatures are displaced, that's a fact.
The river is a habitat that... we all depend on!

But people are different than foxes and rabbits,
Affecting the world with our bad habits.
It's better to love it while we still have it.
Or rat-a-tat-tat... our habitat's gone.

As seen in the video, adapted from the original "Habitat" by Katie Baria-Hendrickson and John Hendrickson.

"I Can Spell" Chant, Example

I can spell tree: t-r-e-e.
I can spell home: h-o-m-e.
I can spell live: l-i-v-e.
But I can't spell... interdependence.

I can spell food: f-o-o-d.
I can spell rain: r-a-i-n.
I can spell bird: b-i-r-d.
But I can't spell... interdependence.

I can spell log: l-o-g.
I can spell bug: b-u-g.
I can spell frog: f-r-o-g.
But I can't spell... interdependence.

Yes, I can! Yes, I can!
INTER-DEPEND-ENCE, INTERDEPENDENCE!

As seen in the video, adapted from "I Can Spell" by Laura Curry.
Shaping the Way We Teach English: From Observation to Action

A video-based professional development resource for teachers of English as a Foreign Language

A new, FREE resource from the American English team!
What about peer observation?

- **QUICK QUIZ!!!**
- What are major phases of the peer observation process?

1. Pre-observation meeting
2. Observation
3. Post-observation meeting
4. Action and further reflection
From Observation to Action and Peer observation

- Unique options for video observations
  - Sound off
  - Image off

- Use From Observation to Action to prepare for peer observation
  - Improve your observation skills with support
  - Role play giving constructive feedback

- Both observation systems can...
  - Strengthen bonds
  - Spice up your teaching
  - Encourage reflection and action!
Teachers Helping Teachers:
Peer Observation for Professional Development

Thank you!

Be sure to visit americanenglish.state.gov

Heather Benucci
Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinars – Course 14