

COMMON CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING A SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN LANGUAGE LESSON

*Jakob Patekar**
Rochester Institute of Technology Croatia

Student teachers and teacher trainees face a number of challenges when they enter the classroom during their university education and upon graduation. The aim of this paper is to highlight the most common challenges that foreign language student teachers and teacher trainees encounter when delivering a lesson in elementary and high school – and to offer advice on overcoming these challenges successfully. The challenges were identified based on our observations of student teachers and teacher trainees during pre-service training and on the state exam. The observations were carried out over a period of seven years, and we used observation sheets to identify the most common problems. The paper thus addresses the issues of using one's voice, motivating learners, giving instructions, planning the length of activities, using additional materials, calling on students, organizing pair and group work, writing on the board, transitioning between activities, handling grammar, carrying out listening activities, and managing the classroom. The paper is intended for pre-service and in-service trainees, mentors, and novice teachers, but also for university instructors of foreign language teaching methodology as it may help point to areas of concern that could be addressed within the methodology course.

Keywords: foreign language teaching methodology, English language teaching, pre-service training, in-service training, student teachers, teacher trainees, novice teachers, mentors

1. INTRODUCTION

Student teachers and teacher trainees face a number of challenges and therefore need proper support (e.g. Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Fantillis & McDougall, 2009; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Nevins Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2002). No matter the quality of the study program, they can never enter the classroom fully prepared – there are aspects of teaching that can be

* jakob.patekar@outlook.com

learned only in the classroom itself. For this reason, it is important that mentors in pre-service and in-service training observe their trainees' classes and guide young teachers through various challenges.

Being a mentor to students is a rewarding and daunting task. It is rewarding because it enables the mentor to share his or her experience and expertise with future teachers and because it gives the mentor an opportunity to learn from the trainees. On the other hand, it is daunting because the mentor needs to set a good example him- or herself, show how teaching works in practice, provide useful feedback, and encourage trainees to self-reflect and grow. The mentor, clearly, plays an important role in pre-service training, as he or she helps trainees apply what they have learned in their methodology course and prepares them to enter the classroom as part of their in-service training upon graduation. The mentor in in-service training guides the trainee – the novice teacher – toward ultimate independence in teaching, which is licensed by the state exam.

Over a period of seven years, we observed a number of classes held by university students of English as part of their pre-service training and by teacher trainees on their state exam. This way, we had a number of opportunities to observe what parts of language teaching methodology pose the greatest challenge to novice teachers. This paper is an attempt to highlight these issues and thus help mentors in pre-service and in-service training and their trainees to focus on some of the elements that are important in delivering a successful foreign language lesson.

Although the paper is based on English language teaching methodology and related sources, we believe its main points can be applied to other languages – and subjects – as well.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. *Research aim*

The aim of this study was to identify the most common challenges that English language student teachers and teacher trainees encounter when delivering a lesson in elementary and high school.

2.2. *Sample*

The sample consisted of 24 university students of English in pre-service program in elementary school, 10 English language teacher trainees who delivered a lesson in elementary school, and 9 English language teacher trainees who delivered a lesson in high school, which is a total of 43 participants.

2.3. Instrument

The instrument used in the study was an observation sheet (see Appendix) on which the performance of student teachers and teacher trainees was noted in rubrics and free form.

2.4. Corpus

The collected observation sheets form the corpus of this research. There were 79 observation sheets (equaling 79 lessons), 70 of which were filled out for teachers in elementary school, and 9 for teachers in high school.

2.5. Procedure

The study was carried out from 2010 to 2016.

Notes from observation sheets were analyzed and the most common issues in delivering a lesson were identified. In rare cases where the notes from the observation sheets lacked detail and hence required clarification, we sought additional information in the student teacher's or teacher trainer's submitted lesson plan. This proved to be useful as it helped us reconstruct certain lessons, seeing that some took place up to seven years ago. The frequency label "most common" is the result of both the number of students who faced a given challenge and the times the challenge occurred across 79 lessons.

The identified challenges relate to using one's voice, motivating learners, giving instructions, planning the length of activities, using additional materials, calling on students, organizing pair and group work, writing on the board, transitioning between activities, handling grammar, carrying out listening activities, and managing the classroom. These are explored in the following part of the paper.

3. CHALLENGES

The challenges are presented in no particular order. Any attempt to systemize the issues proved difficult as each overlaps with another or spans traditional categories such as lesson planning, organization, classroom management, etc. For this reason, they are simply given in a list, without any intention of indicating that one is more important, challenging, or frequent than the other.

3.1. Using the voice

Both actors and teachers use their voices professionally (the latter even more so), but the difference is that teachers are not, unfortunately, given any training in voice use (Maley, 2000). For example, research in the Croatian

context (Bolfan Stošić & Rončević Kolarić, 2006; Bonetti, 2007) clearly highlights the negative impact of the teaching profession on the teacher's voice, with one of the factors being a lack of awareness regarding vocal hygiene.

Students might touch upon the question of the role of their voice if they are fortunate to have a course in presentation skills or to cover these skills as part of another course. It, therefore, does not come as a surprise that some trainees do not sufficiently adapt their voices to the classroom environment, whether in terms of articulation, modulation, or volume. Seeing that they teach a language, this is an important issue. What is more, Brown (2000: 194) finds good voice projection to be one of "the first requirements of good teaching."

If words and sentences are not articulated appropriately or spoken loudly enough, learners might not understand instructions. Moreover, if the trainee speaks in the same tone of voice throughout the lesson, this might make it difficult for him or her to draw learners' attention. This is especially true for teachers of young learners. As Maley (2000: vii) explains, a "richly textured voice, resonant with confidence and vitality, raises the energy levels of those who come into contact with it." Hence, trainees should be made aware of the power of their voice, as with it alone they can encourage learners to listen or act (e.g. Gower, Phillips & Walters, 1995).

It is a good idea for trainees to practice speaking (especially voice projection) in a large room or, better yet, the actual classrooms in which they hold classes. Hopefully, during their pre-service training, trainees will have peer observers sitting in the class who can later inform the trainee whether his or her voice could be heard clearly at the back of the classroom. The mentor, too, should pay attention to this and point it out to the trainee in both pre-service and in-service training, providing further comments on modulation as well.

3.2. Motivating learners

A lot has been written on the importance of motivation in learning a foreign language. Pinter (2006: 36) goes so far as to say that "motivation is crucial in learning other languages," in comparison to learning the first language. What is important to note is the teacher's role in learner motivation (e.g. Mihaljević Djigunović, 1994, 1996), which in young learners may mean the difference between liking and disliking learning the foreign language (e.g. Nikolov, 1999). Fortunately, there are practical publications for teachers that help them to implement and sustain long-term motivation in their classrooms (e.g.

Dörnyei, 2001; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). However, what we want to focus on here is not long-term motivation, which most studies explore, but on gaining learners' attention at the beginning of the lesson and raising their interest in a certain topic. The introductory part is very important as it sets the stage for the rest of the lesson.

What happens in practice is that some trainees spend either too much time trying to motivate their learners – or too little. In the first case, this means the teacher is not likely to achieve the learning outcomes of the lesson; in the second case, the teacher might lose the opportunity to spark interest, and the learners might *disengage* at the start of the lesson. In view of the latter, for example, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) found that what teachers say in the opening stage of the lesson – regarding activities that are to follow – can increase learners' interest. Likewise, Pavličević-Franić (2005) notes that learning is more successful if the student is motivated, interested, and active. Thus, the success of the entire lesson might depend on students' initial motivation (Bežen, 2008).

It is sometimes difficult for trainees to understand what might motivate their learners at the beginning of the lesson (or throughout it), which is reasonable considering the age gap between the learners and the trainee. Clearly, this issue cannot be approached universally as what gets the attention of a 7-year old is not the same as what catches the attention of a 14-year old. The trainee should therefore not hesitate to ask the mentor, or anyone else familiar with what the specific group of learners is interested in, to help him or her choose appropriate topics. As for possible activities, that is, motivation techniques, Trškan (2006) suggests, for example, crossword puzzles, quizzes, mind maps, associations, riddles, video clips, music, mime, short stories, treasure hunt, brainstorming, etc. In selecting topics and activities, the trainee should bear in mind that these need to tie in with the learning outcomes of the lesson.

3.3. *Giving instructions*

According to Harmer (2007: 111), one of “the most important tasks that teachers have to perform is that of organising students to do various activities.” Obviously, this cannot be achieved without clear instructions.

Clarity in giving instructions can be seen as comprised of two levels. The first is clarity in terms of articulation and volume (see 3.1.). The second is clarity in terms of the message, and this is something that trainees also have issues with.

Vrhovac (2001) correctly identifies that novice teachers do not sufficiently use “ritualized” classroom talk and thus omit phrases that are used for gaining attention, giving instructions, transitioning from one activity to another; this leaves learners confused as to what is expected of them. We can connect this issue with the previous point on motivation and highlight that Dörnyei and Csizér (1998: 215) state that among ten things that the teacher can do to stimulate intrinsic motivation is to “state the tasks properly.”

Furthermore, trainees at times have problems adapting to the level of their learners in view of how much learners are able to understand. Giving instructions to 5th grade learners in elementary school is not the same as giving them to 3rd grade learners in high school, and it is definitely not like talking to an adult native speaker. Because trainees are encouraged to use the foreign language as much as possible in the classroom, especially in giving instructions, they forget that they still need to adapt this language to their learners. As Ur (2009) explains, “raw, unmediated new input is often incomprehensible to learners; it does not function as ‘intake’, and therefore does not result in learning” (p. 11). Indeed, teacher talk is crucial for both language acquisition and classroom management (Nunan, 1991).

Depending on the age of the learners, or the years they spent learning the language, the trainee will sometimes have to talk more slowly, use simpler language, and stress key words. Even after the instructions have been adapted in this way, the trainee needs to check whether the learners have actually understood what they need to do. Oftentimes, if trainees do check for comprehension, they simply ask learners if they have understood the instructions, to which learners nod mildly (and almost never say “no”). For this reason, trainees should, for example, ask a learner to repeat what the instructions are and, of course, monitor if the learners are on task.

Giving clear instructions in lower elementary school usually involves demonstrating what needs to be done, for example, by opening the workbook, pointing to the picture, mimicking coloring it, all the while using the foreign language. Most times, teachers will need to repeat the demonstration. Modelling how a task is to be accomplished may be needed at upper levels as well, especially for complex tasks and group work (Brown, 2000).

Good instructions entail the purpose of the task. Instead of simply saying what should be done next, e.g. “Now do task 4,” the teacher should briefly explain how the task will benefit the learners, e.g. “Let’s apply this in task 7,” “How about we see if you can find this in the text?”, “When you fill in the blanks, you’ll understand what Macy and Ella were talking about,” etc.

Instructions that are more complex will, of course, need to be broken down into steps (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 1995).

Another point that needs to be made is that no instructions will be good enough if the teacher does not have the learners' attention. There are things that the teacher can do to minimize distraction, such as giving instructions first and then handing out the materials or arranging the learners into groups (Ur, 2009). If the opposite were the case, the learners' attention would shift to the materials or group members, and they would be less likely to even hear the instructions.

Finally, although trainees are encouraged to move around the classroom throughout the lesson, when delivering instructions, they should pay attention to where they are standing so that all learners are able to hear them. Otherwise, when the teacher is walking down the classroom or standing in the middle of it, some learners behind the teacher's back might not be able to hear the instructions well.

3.4. Planning the length of activities

There are cases when one activity will take 35 minutes of a 45-minute class. For example, this may happen when learners are doing a longer writing task or making a poster. However, in most cases, a lesson should consist of a number of activities varying in the skill(s) they address (listening, reading, writing, speaking), senses they engage (sight, hearing, touch, movement), and length. Out of the three elements above, trainees usually have most problems with the length of an activity.

This issue might be related to time management, which is certainly a challenge for trainees and novice teachers, but we did not include it in this list of challenges for a reason. We believe that time management develops through practice. Therefore, while we should definitely draw trainees' attention to the importance of keeping to the lesson plan and planned times for each activity, we do not believe that we should mark them down or criticize them for not keeping to the times perfectly. If the learning outcomes were achieved and the trainee used varying activities, time is a secondary issue. However, because time management is a skill that is learned through practice, trainees should always have contingency activities ready (and included in the lesson plan) if they finish the lesson before time. As Linse (2005: 189) cleverly observes (referring to teaching young learners), "[n]othing leads to chaos more quickly than children who don't have anything to do."

The issue, then, with the length of activity is when at the outset trainees plan for a 20- or 30-minute activity or when a short activity takes much longer

than expected and the trainee does not stop it. Planning a longer activity is justified if the learning outcomes are going to be achieved and if the activity will engage the learners sufficiently. In other cases, it is better to consider breaking it into several activities that vary in the ways mentioned previously. This is especially true when teaching young learners where activities should take no more than 5 – 10 minutes and where the multisensory approach is required (Vilke, 1995). As for an activity that takes longer than expected, it should be stopped if it begins to lose its point (motivation or learning) and the trainee might tell the learners to finish it for homework (if that is possible). In any case, if the trainee chooses to stay with an activity that is taking more time than planned, he or she needs to be able to explain why he or she made the decision to do so.

We can sum up this particular problem of lesson planning by referring to Harmer's (2007: 364) explanation of the "planning paradox." The paradox relates to the need for preparing and adhering to the lesson plan and the awareness of the fact that this need puts us in danger of "missing what is right in front of us," which in turn closes off "avenues of possible evolution and development." For that reason, Harmer believes that the lesson plan should not be considered a "blueprint to be followed slavishly," but a "proposal for action." Nonetheless, he suggests that teachers in training try to follow the plan that they have made.

3.5. Using additional materials

When trainees hold classes that are being observed by their mentors or advisors for evaluation, it is advisable that they create their own materials instead of downloading ready-made handouts, that is, if they plan on using anything else alongside the learners' textbook and workbook. Creating one's materials not only shows initiative, but it helps trainees to understand the topic they are teaching better. It is not without reason that Ur (2009) claims that good teacher-made materials "are arguably the best there are: relevant and personalized" (p. 192). Although creating materials usually includes writing, drawing, designing, crafting, there are online tools that can be used, for example, to make crossword puzzles, quizzes, and other engaging activities. Unfortunately, it happens that trainees use downloaded material that contains errors or that is not adapted to the learners' level.

Another slip that trainees make regarding the use of materials is to have too many handouts so that learners are sometimes left with five or six papers at the end of the class, which is not only ecologically unfriendly but unsustainable in real classrooms. This probably happens because trainees

want to move away from the “old-fashioned” chalk-and-board approach or want to show that they have put a lot of effort in the lesson. Nevertheless, seeing that learners have their textbooks, workbooks, and notebooks – not to mention the opportunities that modern technology in view of smartphones and tablets provides in some schools – using too many handouts can hardly be justified.

One more note needs to be made regarding the use of materials – in fact, it also relates to tasks already included in textbooks and workbooks. When selecting which activities to use, whether from the class textbook and workbook or elsewhere (own materials, other sources), trainees should bear in mind that activities need to be related to the lesson outcomes. Thus, trainees should be able to explain why they have selected a certain activity and to which learning outcome it relates. As it happens, trainees sometimes do an activity simply because it is fun or because it was in the textbook/workbook. Certainly, doing a fun activity that does not relate to the topic or the outcomes of the lesson can be justified at times – for example, when used as an ice breaker or to take a break from more “serious” work.

3.6. Calling on students

Whether teachers should engage in cold-calling (i.e. calling out learners’ names whether they volunteered to answer or not) or leave it up to the learners to participate is not a point that we would like to discuss here, although it is a matter of contention (e.g. Dallimore, Hertenstein & Platt, 2006, 2012). Acknowledging that most teachers in elementary and high school do call out learners’ names, we would like to focus on how this is done, that is, on what may present itself as a challenge for trainees in that respect.

In larger classes, with 20 to 30 learners, trainees might “lose sight” of those sitting at the back. This perhaps happens because trainees, in a stressful situation of teaching and being observed by the mentor or someone else, feel most comfortable at the front and stay in their physical comfort zone. However, because of this they might fall into the trap of communicating only with several learners in the first several rows. Furthermore, trainees might keep calling on the same few learners who are the most active, which is entirely understandable, but undesirable. Nonetheless, trainees should certainly make an effort to engage all learners in the classroom. A prerequisite for this is to know the names of all learners or that learners have place cards.

3.7. Organizing pair work and group work

Pair work and group work should not be organized simply because it is something the mentor or the advisor would like to see. The trainee should know why he or she is asking learners to work in pairs or groups. Is it because the activity is challenging? Is it because it requires learners of different abilities and talents to be successfully completed? Whatever the reason, the trainee should be able to explain it and should certainly be aware of a number of advantages and disadvantages of pair work and group work (e.g. Harmer, 2007).

Furthermore, when organizing learners into groups, it would be a good idea for the trainee to select group members him- or herself (e.g. to create a mixed-ability group) or, even better, to choose a random method of assigning membership, such as drawing slips of paper with a different symbol for each group. If the choice of membership is left to the learners, they might gather into their usual groups and thus, perhaps, leave someone out or create unbalanced groups. In addition, when forming groups is left up to the learners, it might take too much time or create commotion. Teachers should think about whether and when such freedom of choice is worth it.

Related to group work, Brown (2000: 187) pinpoints that “the most common reason for the breakdown of group work is an inadequate introduction and lead-in to the task” – i.e. not giving clear instructions and not checking whether they have been understood (see 3.3.).

Finally, each member of the group should be familiar with what is expected of him or her, whether the role is appointed by the teacher or the group itself.

3.8. Writing on the board

Croatia does not have a stable handwriting norm. This is because until recently there was no policy at the national level that would regulate what handwritten letters should look like. It was simply left up to textbook authors, publishers, and orthography handbooks (e.g. compare Anić & Silić, 2001 and Babić & Moguš, 2011), so teachers in the 1st grade would teach the type of letters presented in the textbook they opted for. This laissez-faire approach to a norm resulted in several generations, just a year or a few years apart, writing with different types of handwritten letters.

Such plentitude of letter types does not pose a challenge to upper elementary and high school learners who might notice that their teacher’s “S” or “H” is “a bit off.” However, young learners, those from 2nd grade of elementary on, might not recognize the intended letter or might get confused

as to which way they themselves should write. For this reason, it is important for foreign language teachers to be aware of what letter type their young learners are using.

Fortunately, handwriting was finally standardized in 2014 (see Bežen & Reberski, 2014) and approved by the Ministry of Science and Education. Therefore, there is no excuse for trainees – and, in fact, all teachers – to make an effort to learn the new handwriting norm. It goes without saying that the teacher’s handwriting should be neat and legible.

3.9. Transitioning between activities

Usually, a lesson will consist of several activities, aiming at different language skills and learning styles, which helps classroom dynamics and keeps learners engaged. These different activities will most often be directly or indirectly related to one topic. However, this alone is not enough to ensure smooth transitions. Indeed, it takes a lot of experience to be able to move, for example, from a guessing game to a reading task and then to a grammar exercise, then to some listening and finally to a bit of writing, maintaining all the time a sense of a dynamic but smoothly flowing lesson.

What happens in practice is that trainees get lost in numerous activities and the thematic axis of the lesson falls out of focus. In such cases, the transitions are not smooth enough or there are no transitions at all. Some trainees move from activity to activity simply by telling learners which task they need to do, without relating the given activity to the previous one or to the main point of the lesson. Simply put, isolated activities are not meaningful. This might discourage learners as their motivation is higher when they see a clear purpose of what they are asked (told) to do.

Delivering a lesson is like telling a story – different characters and events revolve around a certain point that the author, or teacher, is trying to get across, whether it is that love conquers all or that we need past simple to talk about our visit to the zoo last weekend. While some characters and events may be little stories on their own, they gain full meaning and purpose when put into the wider context.

3.10. Handling grammar

Almost half a century after the term “communicative competence” came into use, and communicative language teaching entered European classrooms (Richards & Rodgers, 1986), we still find grammar taught explicitly, at least in Croatian schools. Of course, there are times when grammar needs to be explained explicitly (Lightbown & Spada, 2008), but in elementary schools, for

the most part, learners could acquire it implicitly. By this we do not mean leaving it up to the students to pick up grammar along the way. A good approach is to have learners discover the rules by exposing them to such patterns that make it possible, which is known as the inductive approach to teaching grammar (Nunan, 2015). This mimics the natural way children learn, which Piaget called constructivism (Pinter, 2006).

A simple example of what active learning looks like in practice is the following; if you write “a banana,” “an apple,” “a carrot,” “a mango,” “an orange” on the board in the 5th grade, there will be at least some learners who will recognize that we use “an” with words starting with a vowel. This approach can be applied to many grammar rules in elementary school, but it is up to the teacher to decide whether the inductive method is worth the time all the time. Although trainees are usually made aware at university of the need to teach grammar implicitly, it appears they often fall back to the way they (we) were taught grammar – through the heavy use of metalanguage and the rote learning of rules.

Another problem with grammar are the tasks used to practice a certain rule. These are often meaningless and lack direct communicative value for learners. Although this does not reflect on the successfulness of a single lesson, it does long-term damage to learners. Therefore, trainees should strive to create useful exercises that are meaningful to learners, if such are lacking in the class textbook and workbook.

Presenting and explaining grammar is not easy. Ur (2009) believes that the challenges lie in the teacher’s understanding of what it means to know a grammatical structure, in recognizing what might cause difficulties for the learners, and finally in presenting examples and formulating explanations in a clear way. For that reason, “clear thinking and speaking are of paramount importance” (p. 81) and the teacher should find a balance between providing a simple explanation and an accurate explanation, which are often in conflict.

3.11. *Carrying out listening activities*

Listening practice generally follows the same standard format: pre-listening, listening, and post-listening (Field, 2002). Each of these steps is important, and we will focus on two most common mistakes that relate to the pre-listening and the listening phase.

Although, for example, Ur (2009) suggests that listening tasks should be alike real-life situations and expose learners to some of the features of actual speech (e.g. chunks, varying pronunciations, colloquial language, noise, etc.),

it should not be forgotten that listening in a foreign language is a complex and cognitively demanding skill (e.g. Rost, 2011).

In view of the latter point, the first problem arises when trainees do not provide sufficient support or structure for the task, and thus leave students without any scaffolding for a challenging activity of listening to a text in a foreign language. This issue encompasses both of the above-mentioned phases. Providing support in a listening task means, for example, motivating learners to listen, setting the scene, having meaningful visuals that accompany the listening task, making sure that the learners are familiar with key vocabulary, etc.

The second problem occurs when trainees assign a listening task without a clear purpose, e.g. "Listen to the following conversation," and then ask comprehension questions. When listening in real life, we always know the purpose, whether it is listening to hear what is for homework or what gate should we go to at the airport. (And in real life it is the listener who asks the questions.) Thus, learners should be aware of what they are supposed to be listening *for* (e.g. for gist, for attitude, for keywords) or what they are expected to be doing while listening (e.g. taking notes, underlining, arranging pictures in the correct order).

To sum up, a task without sufficient scaffolding may frustrate learners, leading them to give up on the task at the very start. A task without a purpose, especially a demanding one such as listening, may result in learners engaging in disruptive behavior.

3.12. *Managing the classroom*

Managing the classroom as a trainee can be extremely difficult as often trainees have not been teaching the same class for a time long enough to set up their classroom management system. Such a system should be based on mutual respect, clear expectations, clear rules, and – most importantly – consistency. When it comes to teaching young learners especially, classroom management is "[o]ne of the biggest challenges facing teachers" (Linse, 2005: 187).

Nonetheless, there are things that trainees can do to minimize the potential for disruptive behavior, such as giving clear instructions, using various activities that address different language levels and learning styles, and monitoring learners' work not just by checking verbally but by moving around the classroom. Ur (2009) also suggests that a mutual understanding of the lesson objective contributes to a disciplined classroom because it raises motivation and increases the likelihood of cooperation.

Most learners who know what they need to do, what is expected of them, and who have the abilities to do so, on their own or with the help of a peer, will be on task. As for those few who persist in disrupting the class, the trainees should try to engage them or even talk to them after class. After all, what these children are looking for is not to upset the teacher, but to get his or her attention.

Trainees usually cannot influence learners' seating arrangements or the way desks are placed. They should, however, bear in mind that desks organized for teamwork (e.g. so that learners are facing each other) will motivate learners to collaborate (i.e. to talk among themselves both when this is needed and when it is not), while desks formed in front-facing rows will be less inviting for horizontal communication with peers, with the teacher or the board being the focus (Evertson, Emmer & Worsham, 2006). Although Brown (2000: 193) calls the latter pattern "military formation," we are not against it, depending, of course, on the learners' age and lesson objectives. Indeed, Harmer (2007: 162) recognizes that there are "considerable advantages to orderly row seating."

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the twelve challenges presented above, it is clear that the role of the mentor in teacher education is an important one. It is the mentors who observe (or should observe) most of the trainees' classes and thus have the best insight into the trainees' strengths and weaknesses. They are the ones who can help novice teachers grow when it matters the most. The mentor's feedback should therefore be immediate and should focus on what the trainee did well and what could be improved. What trainees themselves could do to improve their practice, once they have gained theoretical knowledge and entered the classroom, is to reflect on their teaching – for example, by using the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (Newby et al., 2007). Self-reflection is a valuable tool as it helps the trainee understand that he or she can find solutions to most problems by him- or herself, as opposed to looking to the "all-knowing" mentor for answers – or approval.

It needs to be noted that the challenges described in this paper are the most common as identified during our observations in the period of seven years. This means that perhaps different mentors have other challenges related to delivering a lesson that they would highlight as most common or more important. Therefore, the list of twelve issues presented here is in no way exhaustive. Moreover, these issues pertain to the success of a single lesson. We are fully aware that there are important issues that affect the long-term success

of teaching, such as the way we approach teaching culture, how we provide feedback (error correction), how we track learners' progress, how we assess, etc., but these are clearly beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, we hope that what has been outlined here will be of use to trainees, mentors, and novice teachers in preparing and delivering a foreign language lesson, as well as to university instructors of foreign language teaching methodology in designing their course.

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NAJČEŠĆI IZAZOVI U IZVOĐENJU NASTAVNOGA SATA STRANOGA JEZIKA

Studenti i pripravnici suočavaju se s brojnim problemima kada tijekom svoga sveučilišnog obrazovanja i po njegovu završetku u školsku učionicu zakorače kao učitelji. Cilj je ovoga rada istaknuti najčešće izazove s kojima se susreću studenti i pripravnici, budući učitelji stranoga jezika, pri izvođenju nastavnoga sata u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi. Usto, cilj je rada i ponuditi rješenja za uspješno suočavanje s tim izazovima. Izazovi su uočeni na temelju naših opservacija nastavnih sati studenata tijekom prakse i pripravnika na stručnome ispitu. Opservacije su trajale sedam godina, a koristili smo se svojim bilješkama s tih sati kako bismo prepoznali najčešće probleme. U radu se stoga govori o uporabi glasa, motiviranju učenika, davanju uputa, planiranju dužine aktivnosti, uporabi dodatnih materijala, prozivanju učenika, organiziranju rada u paru i grupi, pisanju na ploči, prijelazu između aktivnosti, odnosu prema poučavanju gramatike, provođenju aktivnosti slušanja te upravljanju učionicom. Rad je namijenjen studentima i pripravnicima, njihovim mentorima, učiteljima-početnicima, ali i sveučilišnim nastavnicima koji drže metodičke kolegije s obzirom na to da rad upućuje na problematična područja kojima bi se na kolegiju mogla posvetiti dodatna pozornost.

Ključne riječi: metodika nastave stranoga jezika, poučavanje engleskoga jezika, studenti, pripravnici, učitelji-početnici, mentori

APPENDIX

Observation Sheet

Student/trainee observed: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____ Grade: _____ N° of students: _____

Lesson: _____

1	<i>Lesson plan</i>	YES NO
2	<i>Outcomes defined</i>	EXCELLENT GOOD IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT
3	<i>Contingency activity</i>	YES NO
4	<i>Structure of the lesson (introduction, main part, closing)</i>	BALANCED NOT BALANCED
5	<i>Motivating learners (at the beginning and throughout the lesson)</i>	
6	<i>Instructions</i>	CLEAR CLEAR MOST OF THE TIME NOT CLEAR
7	<i>Explanations</i>	CLEAR CLEAR MOST OF THE TIME NOT CLEAR
8	<i>Scaffolding (providing help and support)</i>	YES NO
9	<i>Transition between activities/tasks</i>	SMOOTH MOSTLY SMOOTH ABRUPT
10	<i>Use of materials</i>	
11	<i>Use of board</i>	LAYOUT: CLEAR NOT CLEAR HANDWRITING: CLEAR NOT CLEAR
12	<i>Use of technology</i>	
13	<i>Forms of work</i>	INDIVIDUAL WORK PAIR WORK GROUP WORK
14	<i>Checking comprehension</i>	YES OCCASIONALLY NO
15	<i>Monitoring students' work</i>	YES OCCASIONALLY NO
16	<i>Providing feedback</i>	YES OCCASIONALLY NO
17	<i>Error correction</i>	EXPLICIT RECAST REPETITION QUESTION COMMENT
18	<i>Lesson dynamics</i>	DYNAMIC MOSTLY DYNAMIC LACKS DYNAMIC
19	<i>Classroom management</i>	EFFICIENT NOT EFFICIENT NEEDS ASSISTANCE N/A
20	<i>Voice (volume, modulation, clarity)</i>	
21	<i>Time management</i>	EXCELLENT GOOD FAST-PACED SLOW-PACED NOT PLANNED
	<i>Further comments (use back of form)</i>	