The Dynamics of Language Program Direction

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After the Classroom Visit: A Model for the Preparation of Peer Supervisors

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The reinstatement of the language requirement in many universities has brought an upsurge in language class enrollments, resulting in an increased number of sections of courses, and consequently in a greater reliance on graduate teaching assistants (TAs) for staffing.[1] As a rule, TAs are called upon to teach in their first term of graduate work, with only brief preteaching orientation sessions augmented by a methodology course during the initial semester. Schulz (1980) reports that the impact of the increase in language course sections has been felt by the typical language program director, who is often unable to supervise effectively a large body of novice teachers. The burdensome task of supervision is often delegated to peer supervisors, who typically monitor TAs' progress by means of two class visits per term and postvisit conferences. Peer supervisors are usually either advanced TAs who have taught most of the courses in the language sequence, TAs who have a background in education, or lecturers.[2] These individuals are pressed into service for purely pragmatic reasons (most often, heavy demands on the program director's time), and while they may be able to recognize effective teaching, they are often at a loss as to how to proceed when the observed class is not up to the department's standards.

In the ideal world, the university's center for teaching and learning would prepare peer supervisors for carrying out their varied responsibilities by means of microteaching, critiquing videotapes, using classroom observation instruments, and conducting debriefing sessions. Mason (1992), in fact, goes so far as to recommend that advanced TAs be provided with a course in language program direction that includes the study of classroom observation and debriefing. But in most cases the issue of preparation is not addressed at all, and peer supervisors often have their own trial by fire. The novice TA is not alone in dreading the classroom visit and subsequent conference; the new supervisor is often poorly equipped to handle the meeting with the TA after the classroom visit.

To address this frequent lack of preparation for peer supervisors, the authors have devised a development program that can be conducted either prior to the start of classes or in a few short sessions held during the fall term. The program employs a variety of formats (lecture, videotape viewing, role playing, computer tutorial, and discussion) and provides peer supervisors with vital preparation in the following components: models of supervision, planning the classroom visit, use of a classroom observation instrument and its relationship to effective foreign language teaching, debriefing procedures, and remediation strategies. An outline of these components is given in Table 1 with a description of the type of activity and an approximate time for each. In the remainder of this chapter we discuss in turn the rationale and implementation of each component.

Table 1

Workshop for the Preparation of Peer Supervisors

Component	**Activity Type**	**Time**
Models of supervision	Lecture/discussion	30 min.
Planning the classroom visit	Lecture/discussion	15 min.
Effective teaching and the evaluation instrument	Lecture/discussion	40 min.
Writing the narrative and evaluative comments	Lecture/discussion	30 min.
Observation and debriefing, 1	Hands-on	30 min.
Debriefing pointers		15 min.
Observation and debriefing, 2	Hands-on	45 min.
Remediation techniques	Group discussion/ individual study	——

Models of Supervision

In a multisection course the supervisor juggles a number of roles, both formative and summative. In this first component the new peer supervisors are exposed to a quick survey of the various models of supervision that are available to help them realize the variety of supervisory tasks required of them.

New TAs need formative guidance in carrying out the goals that the director has set for the program. For example, TAs must be introduced to various ways to orient instruction toward proficiency goals in language instruction. More experienced TAs need supervisory visits to monitor the techniques they are using and discuss their congruence with program goals. In the summative mode, the peer supervisor assists the director in the process of evaluating teachers. Based on their classroom visit reports, peer supervisors are called upon to recommend that TAs be assigned to a more advanced course, be given more than one section to teach, remain in the same level course, or be required to perform remedial activities such as visiting peer classes.

The literature presents a number of options for implementation of supervision; these include the direct or indirect models, both of which have advantages and disadvantages depending on the professional development of the TA. In the direct model, the supervisor points out problematic teaching behaviors and then offers possible remedies to the TA. Such prescriptive measures may be well received by the inexperienced TA who is only too happy to find a concrete solution to a problem. Direct supervision, then, is a response to the TA who does not have a wide repertoire of techniques to refer to. On the other hand, such a model can arouse feelings of hostility and defensiveness on the part of the TA who resents the implication that only one way exists to produce a certain result. Most important, the direct model does not encourage reflective thinking on the part of the TA or prompt TAs to become decision makers who take responsibility for their own actions.

One model of indirect supervision is Freeman's (1982) alternative supervision. Here the focus is neither prescriptive nor judgmental. Rather, the supervisor acquaints the instructor with alternative behaviors that might produce better results. The instructor is then invited to select among the alternatives and to study the consequences of each.

Another type of indirect supervision is Cogan's (1973) clinical supervision. Here the supervisor and instructor participate in collaborative problem solving during which they create hypotheses and implement strategies that suggest solutions. The process consists of dialogue between the supervisor and the instructor about the latter's assessment of the success of the class. The conversation enables the supervisor to understand the instructor's goals, problems, and successes without becoming judgmental. It also allows the supervisor to make suggestions and to have input without exercising an authoritarian role. Clinical supervision is thought to increase the bond of trust between supervisor and instructor because they both share in the responsibility for remediation. Instructors can also gain confidence about their own decision-making skills.

Clinical supervision is not, however, an immediate choice in the selection of supervisory options. An inexperienced teacher might become anxious or even alienated when faced with the probing questions of the supervisor. Since the supervisor has been trained not to be judgmental, the teacher might demand something like, "Just tell me what you're looking for and I'll do it." Another reaction common to novice teachers is, "How am I supposed to know what would work? I don't have any experience. You're the expert." Clinical supervision does imply an equality or partnership in the teaching situation. Consequently, the inexperienced teacher may benefit from visits to a master class, for example, and more in-class experience before clinical supervision is considered an option.

In sum, peer supervisors must be made aware that there exist a number of well-articulated models for carrying out supervision of teachers. Each model has its own motivations and techniques, such that supervisors can draw on the various models in order to meet the needs of a particular interaction with a teacher.

Planning the Classroom Visit

Being observed by any supervisor is an intimidating experience for most teachers, and a visit by a peer supervisor poses additional problems. We have included this component on planning the visit to address general as well as specific concerns of the peer interaction related to observation. This component also provides a chance to introduce or remind supervisors of departmental policy on carrying out observations. In general, the supervisor should be as unobtrusive as possible so that the class can proceed in its normal manner. Supervisors might find it helpful to do some outside reading on the etiquette of classroom visits before they carry out observations (see, for example, Master, 1983; Murphy, 1992). Below we list some of the other issues that contribute to successful classroom visits.

Timing is especially important in carrying out classroom observation. In the ideal case, the supervisor should try to allow two hours for each visit: one hour for the classroom visit itself and another for the after-class TA debriefing. In some universities, TA unions require a 48-hour warning to be given before the visit. With so much lead time, one might object, the supervisor may well end up viewing a class that is "staged"; however, in truth, the warning time allows TAs to prepare their best possible class, so that the observer gets an idea of the TA's fullest potential. More importantly, advance warning often helps alleviate at least some of the anxiety that TAs face during the observation process.

Supervisors often find it helpful to have a copy of the textbook, the syllabus, and other course materials. At the very least the supervisor should review the TA's lesson plan before the visit, and at best, the supervisor and TA should actually meet ahead of time, albeit briefly, to discuss the goals of the class, the background of the students, problems that can be anticipated, and any other factors. If the supervisor is teaching or coordinating the same course, his or her visit will be even more effective because of familiarity with the teaching situation.

The supervisor should find the classroom beforehand and arrive early; often useful information can be gleaned simply by listening to students as they enter the classroom and chat among themselves. Opinions regarding the need to remain for the entire class are varied. For some supervisors, a visit that lasts for half the class gives an adequate picture of the instructor's style and teaching effectiveness. Other supervisors believe it is important to see all the components of the class hour—from the warm-up to the closure; moreover, in some cases it may be disruptive for the supervisor to leave in the middle of the class. In either case, a supervisor should always thank the instructor when ending the visit.

Effective Teaching and the Evaluation Instrument

This component consists of an informal lecture or interactive discussion with peer supervisor trainees about the notion of effective teaching. Usually peer supervisors are chosen for those positions because they have shown themselves to be master teachers in the classroom; however, our thesis is that in spite of their success—often due to intuition about what works in the classroom, or being a "natural"—they often are not articulate in communicating to others what they actually do to achieve that success. The evaluation form used in a classroom observation serves as an organizer for a discussion in which peer supervisors learn to manipulate the vocabulary of effective teaching behaviors and raise their awareness of classroom dynamics and interactions. Obviously, observers must be very aware of the categories on the evaluation list, and this is their opportunity to familiarize themselves with it. Many of the items on the list represent problems that the new peer supervisors have never encountered in their own teaching, but they must be sensitized to those issues if they are to recognize them in the classrooms of their peers.[3]

The evaluation instrument that we have devised is motivated by the hypotheses and corollaries of the proficiency orientation, as outlined in Omaggio (1985). Of course, historically relevant means of teaching language (ALM, Direct Method, and so on) exist and their methodologies could be represented on an evaluation form, but both of the authors include proficiency among the goals of their language programs. Proficiency, as an organizing principle, is not a methodology, with specified techniques motivated by theory-internal principles. In this sense it is quite different from ALM, for example, where teachers had specific guidelines on how to carry out a limited number of drill types (substitution, pattern, and so on). That approach to language teaching was designed by linguists based on their particular theoretical assumptions about language acquisition, but it was not necessary for teachers to have any deep understanding of the theory behind the method, as is suggested, for example, by the frequent use of native speaker drill leaders without professional preparation. Effective teaching in ALM, then, is just a matter of skills acquisition. On the other hand, it is more difficult to define effective teaching within a proficiency orientation because teachers are not limited in the techniques they employ to achieve the desired outcome. Omaggio's (1985) hypotheses and corollaries refer to "promoting active communicative interaction among students," "creative language practice," use of "authentic language . . . whenever possible," a "concern for the development of linguistic accuracy," attention to affective needs, and "cultural understanding," for example. To realize these goals, teachers must be able to assess their students' progress (that is, recognize their levels of proficiency) and devise techniques and activities based on that assessment. While the literature is replete with suggestions from experienced teachers as to the best means to implement the goals of proficiency, theory offers no prescribed way to do so.

Moreover, the communicative focus implicit in the development of proficiency requires that the classroom be student-centered rather than teacher-centered, in contrast to grammar-translation (the "default" method for teaching language in the absence of any formal approach) or to ALM, for example. Teachers with little professional preparation find it difficult to devise and structure activities and manipulate interactions in the classroom in a way that places the focus of language practice on students.

In short, the characteristics of a proficiency orientation as outlined in the preceding two paragraphs create particular challenges for novice teachers because there is no empirically prescribed way to achieve the goal of proficiency. The evaluation form itself fills a gap for these teachers; it serves as a teaching device that specifies which behaviors contribute to effective teaching in the proficiency-oriented classroom in addition to its roles in (peer) evaluation of teachers and even lesson planning. The discussion session with peer supervisors in this component, then, should be centered on the evaluation form.

Writing the Narrative and Evaluative Comments

Acheson and Gall (1987) and others emphasize the importance of a narrative that records objective data for use in a feedback or follow-up conference with teachers after the classroom visit. The evaluation form we use includes a narrative of two parts: an objective chronological log of what occurred in the classroom (that is, the observer's reproduction of what the lesson plan must have been) and a column of subjective comments on those activities.

The objective data on what happened in the classroom serve as a common point of departure for observer and observed for the eventual discussion of evaluative comments. For example, TAs might erroneously believe that they have conducted appropriately timed warm-ups at the beginning of class; reference to the supervisor's log can provide the exact sequence of events and how long each took. In this type of narrative the sentences should be as objective and nonevaluative as possible—for example, instead of writing "Students are bored," the supervisor could note that "Students are yawning and writing letters." If in reconstructing the class the supervisor mixes observations with judgments, the TA is apt to become defensive and will find it more difficult to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of the lesson. Objective narrative accounts of class visits, of course, will differ according to the personal style of the supervisors. Some will write sentences with direct quotes, while others will write more succinct notes. The most important factor is the accuracy and objectivity of the account.

In addition to the objective narrative, but separately, the authors recommend that supervisors note subjective evaluative comments that refer to the actual activities and behaviors exhibited by the teacher and students. From these activity- or behavior-specific notes, the supervisor can synthesize a summary of general areas to discuss in the debriefing session. Record both the TA's strengths and the areas that need improvement. Many new instructors find it difficult to discuss their strong points, so the supervisor's notes should be able to furnish examples of positive behaviors.

Since observation reports are often evaluation instruments that become part of a TA's file, the supervisor should exercise caution in what comments actually appear on the page. Some supervisors limit their negative comments to those areas that rank high in the priority of remediation, because a page full of negative comments in every area would certainly discourage and possibly overwhelm a new teacher. Also, most universities require that the TA and the supervisor both sign the evaluation form to indicate that the debriefing has taken place. The TA's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the supervisor's assessment, however; in cases of disagreement the TA should be allowed to include a written statement of objections in the evaluation file.

Observation and Debriefing, 1

After familiarizing supervisors with the observation instruments and setting up the classroom visit, the professional development model suggested in this chapter provides new peer supervisors with an example of how an observation and debriefing are carried out. It is not possible for a faculty member and several TA supervisors to observe unobtrusively an actual class. The use of a video segment of classroom teaching overcomes this pragmatic limitation and also offers other advantages.[4] First, it ensures that the peer supervisors do indeed recognize effective teaching and allows them to practice their new role in a realistic manner. Second, it establishes a certain interobserver reliability among peer supervisors, who all use the same footage for observation practice, and reinforces common goals of the language program. A well-chosen tape contains a class of a similar level, approach, and content (language versus literature) to the ones to be supervised; moreover, the footage should contain a variety of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors both on the part of the instructor and on the part of the students that will serve as the basis for later discussion.

The session leader should prepare ahead of time a segment of actual classroom video that will be shown to the workshop participants; this preparation should include selection of classroom footage that will be pedagogically useful as a demonstration for the participants, and completion of the narrative and evaluative portions of the evaluation form based on the performance of the teacher on the tape.[4] The session leader shows the classroom footage to the new supervisors and then reveals the comments made on the evaluation form either by means of handouts or overhead transparency. The leader and an accomplice then perform a role play of a debriefing session, with the leader taking the role of a peer supervisor and the other actor that of the teacher whose class was just viewed on tape (or vice versa). This simulated debriefing shows the workshop participants by example some of the ways in which the comments in the observer's notes are translated into a constructive follow-up visit. Ideally, the role play should be rehearsed before the workshop so that both the "peer supervisor" and the "teacher" can model debriefing behaviors and bring up issues or problems that will provide the basis for discussion in the next phase of debriefing.

Debriefing Pointers

Classroom observation is basically a data-finding mission. The real benefits of the observation process come from the debriefing session, in which supervisor and teacher together contribute to the interpretation and synthesis of the data gathered in the classroom. In this collaborative process the participants should ideally arrive at some conclusions about the teachers' performance and articulate specific strategies for improvement. This component provides participants with specific techniques for translating the comments on the evaluation form into a follow-up in order to maximize the effectiveness of the debriefing session. The role play of a debriefing can serve as an organizer for the group discussion in this component; the program director leads a discussion on the role play and elicits comments on appropriateness of style, thoroughness of comments, and extent of suggestions for remediation.

The debriefing is best scheduled as soon as possible after the classroom visit while the class at issue is still fresh in the minds of the participants (preferably within 24 hours), and it should take place in a quiet area where supervisor and TA will not be interrupted.

One of the most difficult parts of the debriefing for supervisors is knowing how to begin. The first step might be to reconstruct the class using the objective narrative described above. Again, this narrative should be an uncontroversial point of departure for further discussion. The TA should have the opportunity to provide additional information based, for example, on knowledge of the particular students involved in interactions noted by the supervisor.

For most supervisors, after the reconstruction of the class, the next steps are to analyze and interpret the data, and then to draw conclusions, with the supervisor and the TA both contributing to the process. Although many supervisors begin by asking the TA's impression of how class went, the TA may hesitate to give an honest answer for fear of appearing overconfident. On the other hand, the TA may be reluctant to answer negatively for fear that the supervisor will agree. Some possibilities for opening might be to ask more neutral questions, such as "Which aspect of the data would you like to discuss first?" or "Would you like to have been a student in today's class?" or "Would you teach today's class differently the next time?"

During the discussion both supervisor and TA should contribute their ideas. The extent of the mutual exchange will depend on the personality and the level of experience of the TA. A TA may be shy during the first meeting: it may take time for trust to develop so that he or she feels free to present his or her ideas. Or if the TA has had little experience in the classroom and is only taking his or her first course in methodology, he or she may not have many insights to contribute. In any case, the TA should be encouraged to think about alternative objectives and teaching strategies and how to implement them in future classes.

The supervisor should try to close the meeting on a positive note by summarizing and reviewing several areas for improvement prior to the next supervisory visit, then praising the strong points noted during the most recent visit.

Observation and Debriefing, 2

After the new peer supervisors have had a chance to discuss the first role play, the faculty supervisor exposes them to another video segment of a language class. This time the new peer supervisors have to watch carefully and take down their own notes, using the evaluation form, which they will use in another role play based on the new video segment. Again, it will be necessary to provide a second actor to carry out the role play. If the faculty member takes the role of the teacher, it will be easy to introduce complications into the situation in order to try the new peer supervisor's skills at debriefing, albeit in a nonthreatening setting. If the second actor is another new peer supervisor, the exercise has the benefit of forcing that peer supervisor to view the debriefing from the perspective of the teacher whose class was observed. In either case, peer supervisors find this to be a very productive exercise, even if at first they are not experienced or at ease performing a role play.

Remediation Techniques

Although many peer supervisors have had extensive experience in teaching within the language program, they may not have had extensive background in foreign language teaching methodology. They may indeed recognize effective teaching but may not be able to provide assistance to the TA whose class somehow falls short of its goal. We propose that faculty supervisors make available to peer supervisors a bank of reference materials that will help them to give concrete suggestions to teachers in the debriefing session. Appendix 3 contains a sample selection ("Interaction") of one such resource that conforms to the goals of our respective language programs. This section is one part of the materials developed in conjunction with the evaluation instrument in Appendixes 1 and 2; it offers suggestions that correspond to each of the items on the evaluation form. We also have envisioned an interactive computer tutorial that contains the same type of suggestions. In addition to providing comments and discussion during the debriefing session, the peer supervisor can send a teacher to the computer tutorial to do more follow-up on specific strategies for improving problematic areas.

Conclusion

Observation and debriefing play an integral part in the preparation of novice teachers. In large multisectioned language programs the director alone cannot effectively carry out this daunting task, and consequently the quality of teacher preparation may suffer. In practice, directors have had to rely on the talents of specific individuals, the peer supervisors, who more often than not lack background in supervisory techniques. In this chapter, we have elaborated a model for preparing peer supervisors that can help to alleviate the burden of observation placed on directors of large language programs. Just as a methodology class and a practicum prepare novice TAs for their responsibilities as teachers, this model provides peer supervisors with at least a minimum of formal preparation, giving them a number of necessary skills that they need to carry out their jobs successfully.

Of course, the model presented here is only a skeleton that can be modified to suit the needs of individual language programs. The exact form of the workshop will be dictated by the expertise of the director and his or her rapport with supervisors. We have implemented the model described here in our language programs with positive results: on the one hand, TAs receive regular, valuable feedback on their teaching, and on the other hand, peer supervisors face the task of observation and debriefing with confidence rather than dread.

Notes

1. We would like to acknowledge many helpful comments from H. Jay Siskin and an anonymous referee for this volume. Errors are, of course, the responsibility of the authors.
2. While lecturers are technically not peers of TAs, we use the term "peer supervisor" in a manner that subsumes types of supervisors who have no formal training in supervisory techniques.
3. See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. The visual format for the first page (narrative) of this form (Appendix 1) was taken from a University of Texas document. The second page of evaluative categories (Appendix 2) was developed by the authors.
4. Of course, faculty supervisors should obtain written permission from teachers before showing footage of their classroom performance to others.

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Appendix 1

Sample Observation Narrative

Classroom Visit Observation Form

Teacher: *A. R.* Time/Date: *10:30 A.M.*

Observer: *R. D.* Class: *Spanish 103*

Time:	What happened? (Objective)	Comments (Subjective)
10:30	*¿verdad o falso?* questions using "*lo* + adj."	you should do more examples! maybe have students invent some of their own
10:35	activity on handout: Ss make sentences with "*lo* + adj."	good follow-up to previous activity; good modeling of activity; maybe do two or three examples if they are slow starters; good choral reps of cues
	follow-up of student responses: S: *"lo bueno de tener dinero es que puedocomprar sombreros"* T: "*OK, muy bien*"	vary responses; maybe ask other Ss if they agree with a S's opinion; give other follow-up feed-back/input: "Ah, Brent, *¿te gustan mucho los sombreros? ¿Tienes una colección muy grande?*"
10:45	personal questions: "*¿Qué es lo bueno de trabajar?*"	good open-ended extension of previous activity; good transition

10:47	new vocab presentation • choral repetitions • personal questions w/ vocab	good contextualization in questions but contextualize S's answers too: don't parrot their verb forms
	T: "*Has preparado un curriculum?*" S: "*Sí, tengo un curriculum*"	You seemed to ignore her response and started to discuss the tense of her answer; the focus here is on using new vocab, which she did correctly, no?
10:55	definition activity: in pairs Ss make up definitions of new vocab items and partners have to guess which corresponds	good circumlocution practice; have you modeled definitions before for them?
11:03	follow-up: check definitions	
11:07	"lecture": contrast of *pedir/preguntar*	how could you have gotten *them* to arrive at the correct generalization without a long explanation? Note that *you* had trouble putting it into words in Spanish; how can they do it?
	personal questions with *pedir/preguntar*	a big leap for them—too hard; plus you weren't paying attention to *what* they were saying
11:13	mechanical *pedir/preguntar* activity on hand-out	this should have preceded personal questions—actually this could have been used as your presentation!
11:18	assignment for tomorrow	what about a closure activity?

General Comments

+ comfortable atmosphere—nice!

+ excellent pace of activities; good plan—you were right on the mark!

+ good integration of follow-ups and extensions of activities; good transitions

• vary your responses to student answers; you usually just say *"OK, muy bien"*; pay more attention to the content of student answers, diverting attention to form only in form-centered activities

• remember: presentation in context—mechanical/meaningful practice—open-ended activities; avoid lengthy grammar explanations

Appendix 2

Evaluation Checklist

	Comments	N/A
Preparation		
Written lesson plan		
Variety of activities		
Planning for instructional sequence		
Contextualization/personalization of material		
Followed curriculum		
Use of materials		
Use of audio-visuals		
Use of board		
Use of text		
Implementation of plan		
Warm-up		
Overview at beginning		
Appropriate level		
Clarity of directions/explanations/assignments		
Application/practice of material presented		
Efficient use of time/pace		
Monitoring of group work		
Follow-up of group work		
Logical sequencing		
Transitions		
Closure		
Interaction		
Encourages use of target language (S-T, S-S)		

Appropriate error correction

Positive feedback to students

Ratio of T-S speaking

T-S rapport

Encourages participation

Moves around the room

Eye contact with students

Body language

Avoids distracting mannerisms

Enthusiasm

Recognition of lack of S understanding

Ability to answer questions

Shows cultural sensitivity

Teacher language

Appropriate level

Grammatical accuracy

Pronunciation and intonation

Appropriate use of target language and English

Speaks clearly and audibly

Professionalism

Punctuality (beginning and end)

Appearance

Confidence

Maintains authority and professional distance

Appendix 3

Sample Reference material for Peer Supervisors (from Davis and Turner, 1992)

Interaction

Encourages Use of Target Language (T-S and S-S)

From the first day of class, students should learn basic phrases in the target language for classroom business ("How do you say . . . ?," "Slow down, please," "Do we have to . . . ?," etc.). You should always insist that students use the culturally acceptable level of politeness in these expressions (e.g., the simple command "Repeat!" is not polite in any European language). Do not comply with a student request that is not presented in the target language if you know that the request is among those the student should be responsible for; make the student rephrase it.

Tell students early on that important information (assignments, test dates, etc.) will be given in the target language only. If they do not understand, they must be responsible for asking you for repetition, rephrasing, or explanation outside of class. Do not send the message that the target is for games and activities only and that English is the medium for important information.

Group work monitoring is a good time to send the message that students must use Spanish when they can. You can insist on target language usage in a one-to-one interaction, where a student would be less embarrassed than in the whole class setting.

Do Appropriate Error Correction

Visit other classes recommended to you by your supervisor and pay close attention to the various strategies available for guiding students when they make errors.

Reconsider your own attitude towards the various predictable errors that students invariably make in your language. Do you have pet peeves? Does your verbal reaction or body language reaction to student errors intimidate or belittle students? Remember that errors may be lexical or sociolinguistic (register) and not only mistakes in grammar.

Listen carefully to what students are saying. During a given exercise concentrate on one or two points that you want to evaluate, and ignore other, less relevant errors.

Develop skill in helping students learn from errors. After a class is over you can reflect on the different ways you could have handled a student error interaction. You can often guide a student to produce a correct form.

Give Positive Feedback to Students (see "Error Correction" above)

Listen to what students say, not just for accurate forms. Build a response to what they say. Prepare some possible responses ahead of time; don't limit yourself to "very good," "excellent," "perfect," etc. Remember that native speakers would never use these phrases to acknowledge the answer to "Did you go to the movies last night?"

Reward risk taking and creativity. Even if a student makes errors, react positively (verbally and with body language) to an attempt to express a sophisticated thought, higher order thinking, or manipulation of an advanced form.

Learn to tolerate silence. Sometimes a student's silence means "I'm processing information" and not "I don't know the answer."

Ratio of T-S Speaking

Make sure that you plan enough activities that emphasize student production.

Keep presentations to a minimum. If you find yourself in front of the room giving a speech or describing a map or picture in detail while students sit passively for too long, something is wrong!

Insist that students read up on grammar points, for example, the night before your presentation so that you can spend class time on activities that make them practice the points. This can be done by assigning the reading and limited exercises that require the students to have read the lesson. Pop quizzes are also effective in getting students to prepare lessons; however, they can be seen as an intimidation tactic and thus undermine your efforts to build a good rapport with the class.

T-S Rapport

Arrive in the classroom five minutes early and chat with students in the target language. Avoid starting class abruptly right when the bell rings.

Schedule your office hours on different days during the week and at different times of the day.

Try to find out why students do not come to your office hours.

Require students to come by your office early in the term (to pick up an assignment, for example) so that they will know where you can be reached.

Use student information cards (filled out on the first day of class) to learn personal details about students; include this information in your personalization of activities.

Let your sense of humor show. Tell a joke every now and again.

Facilitate S-S Interaction

Include small group and pair activities in your plan that are purposeful and require students to communicate information in the target language. A verb drill, for example, is not an appropriate pair activity in this sense.

Ask questions that make students responsible for the work they were supposed to have done in groups.

Make students responsible for their classmates' personal information, likes and dislikes, extracurricular activities, etc., by repersonalizing the information that comes out of group activities. For example, you respond to a student Mike, "So, Mike, you like to ski?" Later in the class when skiing is again the topic, ask other students, " Who was it who likes to ski?" [Mike].

Make students learn each other's names and use them from the first day of class.

Encourage Participation

Allow adequate time after asking a question before you go to another student for the answer. Count four or five full seconds (one Mississippi two Mississippi . . . to yourself if need be. Sometimes a student's silence means "I'm processing information" and not "I don't know the answer."

Ask questions of varying degrees of difficulty so that all students can participate, i.e., do not limit participation to just the "good" students.

Scan the entire room when you ask for volunteers, making eye contact with individuals.

Vary activities from full class to small groups/pairs so that shy students will have a situation in which they can speak comfortably.

Remind students explicitly that it is their active participation that ensures success in learning a language. If participation figures into the class grade, periodically in the term offer a preliminary participation grade so that students will know where they stand.

Move Around the Room

Make sure that you do not stand in the same one or two places in the classroom (e.g., near the board for explanations, near the front row during activities). It is a good idea to change your position in the room often, without making students dizzy, of course. This technique reduces student boredom.

Maintain Eye Contact with Students

Start out at the beginning of the class by consciously choosing four or five random students in different parts of the room with whom you will make eye contact during a given presentation. During the presentation concentrate on just those faces, letting your eyes roam from one to the next. The next day choose different faces. The goal is to speak to the group with the same personality and interest as you would with one interlocutor.

Try to find the right number of seconds to look at each person: too short a glance makes you come across as nervous, and too long a stare is interpreted as confrontational and intimidating.

Scan the entire room when you ask for volunteers, making eye contact with individuals.

Body Language

Set the proper tone for the class with body language. Crossed arms can communicate hostility, mistrust, or nervousness. Too relaxed a posture can undermine your authority, slow the pace, and suggest boredom on your part.

Arrange to have your class videotaped. Study your own body language when you correct student errors or react to responses, when you solicit volunteers, etc.

Avoids Distracting Mannerisms

Arrange to have your class videotaped so that you can pick up on mannerisms that are distracting. Physical tics include twisting on your mustache, pushing up your sleeves, hair twisting, playing with chalk or pens, etc. Common verbal tics are "um," "OK," "Let's see," etc., and target language equivalents. Students love to spend a class counting repetitions of tics instead of paying attention to the lesson.

Enthusiasm

Everybody has bad days now and again, but teachers are professionals, and personal problems should be left outside the classroom.

Motivate students to learn by communicating your own interests in the target language and culture.

Show students that you are happy to be teaching your language: maintain an upbeat tone, use enthusiastic gestures, etc.

Provide Individual Attention to Students

Strike a balance between meeting an individual's needs in the classroom and maintaining the attention of the entire class. If you find that answering one student's question, for example, is taking too long or is not beneficial to others, tell the student that you can see him/her after class or during office hours.

Consciously practice sweeping the room visually to check for raised hands or other signs of student incomprehension or lack of "withitness."

Recognize of Lack of Student Understanding (see "Error Correction," Above)

Repeat a student's question out loud for the entire class. First, this helps everyone to follow the discussion, and more importantly, the student can check to see if you really understand what is being asked. Thus, you avoid wasting time and patience answering the wrong question.

Avoid asking "Are there any questions?" Students are often silent after this question, and their silence does not mean that they understand everything. Use instead specific check questions that actually test comprehension or whether or not students can manipulate the structures or vocabulary.

Ability to Answer Questions

Make sure you have studied a grammar point, reading, etc., ahead of time so that you will be prepared to answer questions.

Ask other teachers to help you anticipate questions; many of them are predictable, and experienced teachers can clue you into problems before they arise.

Prepare a set response or two to questions that you cannot answer. It is all right to put students off every now and then with an "I don't know," but you should find out the answer by the next day. If you use "I don't know" too often, your authority and credibility will be eroded.

Show Cultural Sensitivity (Race, Gender, Orientation, etc.)

Racist, sexist, homophobic, etc., remarks are not acceptable. Even if you do not "celebrate diversity," your job is to facilitate language acquisition, and this type of insensitivity can undermine your success.

Stress Cultural Similarities in Addition to Highlighting Differences