

# Introduction

*When you become a teacher you get training, and if you go on into management there are training courses for that, but no one ever tells you how to do teacher training because it's just seen as another kind of teaching, just telling people what you know because you're a good teacher.*

Donya, teacher trainer, UK

Many experienced teachers will find themselves in the situation Donya describes at some point in their careers. In management roles or simply respected by their students and by their peers, they may be asked to deliver workshops, observe colleagues or act as a mentor. But they're often expected to do that on the basis of their teaching skills alone, and while teacher training can certainly be considered 'teaching of teachers', there is more to being a successful trainer than simply knowing how to teach, in the same way that there is more to being a good language teacher than simply knowing how to speak the language.

## Why we wrote this book

Like Donya, we see that there is a lack of practical help available to experienced teachers who hope to take on more of a training role – in other words, to move from teacher to trainer. The problem is that even if opportunities to start training are available, opportunities for learning *how to become a trainer* are often very limited, and in certain contexts may be non-existent. Even the teachers who are lucky enough to have access to guidance as they begin their careers as trainers may find the task more daunting than anticipated, or feel that the guidance they receive is inadequate.

This lack of support inevitably makes life difficult for new trainers, who have to find their way through trial and error, but it also increases the risk that the training they deliver will have limited impact, or even the wrong impact: one teacher describes how, tired of attending training sessions that didn't meet his needs, he has 'on more than one occasion, . . . skipped an offered session, opting for *elopement* over *development*' (Kirkham, 2015, p. 4)! It's understandable that the transition into teacher education isn't easy. Moving from teaching to training doesn't just entail doing things differently, or even doing entirely new things; it involves 'a transformation of perspective on the educational process' (Wright, 2009, p. 104), and that is a challenge. But at the same time, experienced teachers have a wealth of classroom know-how that they can tap in to when they begin training, and right through their training careers – *if* the right support is provided.

## Who can benefit from this book

Anyone who is moving from teacher to trainer, even in an unofficial manner, should be able to take something from this book. It does not assume that you have had any experience of delivering training, nor do we believe that 'one size fits all'. We are very aware that every educational context is different, and that different solutions are needed for different challenges. However, we do believe that there are certain universal principles that all trainers can benefit from, and we will address these in the initial chapters.

So this book is for you if you are, for example:

- an experienced teacher who is called upon to support colleagues, either one-to-one, or by delivering workshops
- a trainer-in-training on a course such as Cambridge English Train the Trainer, or as a tutor-in-training to deliver the Cambridge CELTA or equivalent
- a co-ordinator or manager who is required to guide, observe or train staff
- a practising teacher trainer who wishes to review or develop their knowledge and skills
- a supervisor or inspector, required to observe teaching and deliver feedback
- a teacher receiving a trainee in their class as part of an initial teacher training programme

We expect that you will be an experienced language teacher, and that you will broadly place your skills at either Proficient or Expert level on the Cambridge English Teaching Framework (see Appendix 1). In addition we expect that you will have been through a certain amount of formal teacher training yourself during your career, which you will be able to draw upon as you read through the book. Although our focus is principally the training of English language teachers and the examples we use will reflect that, there is no reason why trainers of teachers of other languages can't benefit from the book too, or even those training teachers of other subjects – the principles of teacher learning that we present are drawn from research undertaken in a wide range of educational contexts.


## Our approach

A key part of our approach is the belief that new trainers can and should draw extensively on their teaching experience as they make the transition into teacher training. There are many skills and habits that can be transferred from the classroom to the training room, and our experience

suggests it is very much the case that 'experienced teachers make effective teacher educators if their experience is acknowledged and built upon' (Vilches, 2015, p. 286).

At regular points, therefore, you will see tasks that require you to look back at your teaching career and draw out memories and insights that can inform your work as a trainer. You'll see these labelled as **From teacher . . .** tasks. In addition to these, you'll also want to check your understanding of the concepts that you encounter, to gauge your progress and to help you absorb and retain new ideas. To do that we have also created . . . **To trainer** tasks. We have provided suggestions and responses to most of the tasks in the Notes on tasks section in the back of the book (where we haven't, the response is either unique to you or covered in the text that follows the task), but these should not be seen as 'answers'. Instead, we hope they will serve as prompts that encourage you to reflect on your context and draw your own conclusions.

One of the best ways to develop your training skills is to learn from skilled trainers. We are extremely lucky to have been able to draw on the experience of colleagues around the world who have kindly provided their insights through case studies, helping to demonstrate how principles are put into practice. Their input has meant that this book includes a wide range of examples and contexts, and we have been able to highlight the differences (but also the similarities!) that exist between training contexts around the globe.

We feel that there's tremendous value in hearing directly from some of these trainers, in order for you to develop an understanding of how widely training contexts can differ, of how trainers solve some of the problems that their contexts present and of how the trainers moved from the classroom to the training room. So at certain points in the book you will see that there are video resources to supplement the text. Some of these appear as part of a task, while others serve to elaborate on what we have described, and are referred to in the **Trainer voices** sections at the end of each chapter. The videos are indicated by the  icon and can be accessed by scanning the QR Code in each section. This is followed by **To find out more** sections with recommendations for further reading.

Lastly, we strongly believe that teacher trainers have a responsibility to build bridges between educational research and classroom practice by ensuring that the concepts and practices they foster in trainees are evidence-based. Where possible we do that in the book by providing references in the text to (1) show that there is a theoretical basis or research evidence for our claims and (2) guide you towards further reading. There is a growing body of research literature on teacher training and how teachers learn, and we feel that it is important that new trainers are introduced to it.

## How to use this book

The book is loosely divided into four parts. The first is Chapter 1, which introduces the theoretical background to teacher training and many of the concepts that are referred to in discussions of training practice later in the book. Chapters 2–4 deal with planning and delivering training sessions, Chapters 5–8 deal with mentoring and observing teachers and giving them feedback on teaching, and finally Chapters 9–10 focus on bringing it all together when planning programmes of training and your own development as a trainer.

This book can be read cover-to-cover for a comprehensive introduction to language teacher training, but just as effectively you can jump to the part that is most relevant to your immediate needs. Where possible we encourage you to read Chapter 1 first, to get a sense of the ideas that underpin the rest of the book and to help re-orient your perspective towards that of a trainer.

What we don't cover in this book is the content of a teacher training course. In other words, we are not going to tell you what to teach your trainees. Our concern here is with the processes of teacher training, which include making decisions about what trainees need to learn, and we hope to provide you with the tools to make those decisions yourself. As an experienced teacher you will already be familiar with many principles of effective language teaching, and there are many other excellent resources available that outline foundational skills and knowledge, such as Penny Ur's *Course in English Language Teaching* (Ur, 2012).

*From Teacher to Trainer* is standalone: in other words, you can use it as a self-study guide as there are suggested responses and solutions to the tasks we set. However, if you are in a situation where others are also moving into the role of trainer, most of the tasks in the book can be shared and discussed, and it will be helpful to work through them with others who are also on the journey from teacher to trainer.

## Terminology

We use *teacher education* as the umbrella term for *teacher training* and *teacher development* (Freeman, 1989). Broadly speaking, we see teacher training as any learning process led by a trainer, while teacher development is a learning process led by the teacher. For any teacher, at any career stage, both are necessary for effective, sustained professional learning, and they should be seen as complementary. Our main concern in this book is teacher training, and our definition of it means that we see it as a diverse activity. Being a trainer also means being a coach, mentor, counsellor, and tutor (to name just a few of the different hats trainers wear).

We use *trainer* to refer to those who plan and/or deliver workshops or teacher education programmes, provide feedback on teaching, or mentor teachers. If you are doing these things then consider yourself a trainer, whatever your formal job title! In certain contexts, such as online or on CELTA courses, the term *tutor* is used to mean the same thing.

We use *teacher*, *trainee* or *participant* to refer to those who learn from, or are guided by, the trainer. For some, *trainee* refers to teachers at the beginning of their careers, or on preservice courses. Here we have chosen to use it to refer to teachers of all levels of experience who are learning with the help of a trainer.

We refer to the people learning language in teachers' classrooms as *students* or *learners*.

A *session* is the broad term we use for a teacher training workshop, and we use *training rooms* to refer to the places where those take place, whether physical or virtual. When we talk about what teachers do in their *classrooms*, we use the term *lesson*, and when we talk about what teachers do as part of their professional lives in general, in and out of the classroom, we use *teaching practice*, or just *practice*.

The verb *to train* often carries connotations of repetitive activity, and of having habits 'drilled in'. It's common to hear people talk, for example, about *training in the gym* or of *having a personal trainer*. Sometimes training means learning how to operate machinery, as in being *a trained pilot*. And animals are often the objects of training: you might *train a dog to sit*, or make sure that it's *toilet trained*. Training in this sense – of being taught to act a certain way in particular situations, or to respond a certain way to particular cues – sometimes carries over into discussions of teacher training, and it is associated with the idea of training as a process of instilling practical techniques or routines for use in the classroom. Helping teachers form good habits is indeed a part of what trainers do, but it is far from the complete picture, as we hope to show you. The classroom is not a piece of machinery that functions in predictable ways, and our goals as trainers go beyond showing trainees 'which buttons to press'; trainers want teachers to understand what they're doing and why they're doing it:

Teachers need to be *trained* in practical techniques, but must also be *educated* to see those techniques as exemplars of certain theoretical principles and therefore subject to continual reappraisal and change. This is necessary in the interests of the learner. If teachers are not educated in this sense then they cannot derive expertise from experience.  
(Widdowson, 1984, p. 88)

Ultimately, we all want our training to lead to better outcomes for our trainees' learners, and we also want our trainees to be able to continue to grow and develop once they leave the training room. So, our use of the verb *to train* indicates much more than the formation of good habits in

teachers: we want them to understand the rationale for the techniques we train them in, when to use them, and why. While we could probably identify other terms that reflect these goals better (such as *teacher educator*, *facilitator*, or *teacher of teachers*), we've found that by far the most widely understood title for what we do is *trainer*, so that is what we've used in this book.



### TRAINER VOICES



Scan the QR Code and watch the videos 'Starting out' and 'Trainer profiles' to hear trainers talk about how they got started and where they work now.



### TO FIND OUT MORE

Woodward, T. (1991). *Models and metaphors in language teacher training: Loop input and other strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (At the very beginning of this book Tessa Woodward considers the roles of trainer, teacher, student, etc. and how the relationships between them are important to teacher training.)

# 1 From teaching learners to teacher learning

Here we consider:

- Different teaching and learning contexts and how they affect teaching
- What effective teachers do
- What effective teachers know
- How expert teachers acquire that knowledge and skill
- The implications of teacher learning for trainers

*I think we're always learning as teachers and trying to do better, and we should be.*

Claire, teacher trainer, Cyprus

## Teaching and learning contexts

It's not uncommon for professionals in several fields to perform their roles in a variety of different situations. Footballers, for instance, have to play home and away, and will play in dozens of different stadiums in the course of a season, each with its own characteristics. The demands of a league game differ to those of a cup game, and a match in the early stages of a cup competition may have a very different feel to a match in the knockout stages, when it's a case of 'winner takes all'. But despite these variations, the rules of the sport are always the same, and so is the objective: score more goals than your opponent.

Language teachers sadly don't enjoy professional footballers' wages, but we need to be similarly adaptable. You probably teach in several different classrooms in an academic year, and each one will differ in terms of size, layout, resources and ambience. You may have a weekly timetable that includes classes of young children, teenagers, university students and working professionals, particularly if you work for a private language school. Learners in those groups will have different motivations for attending classes, and even when the same group meets, the group dynamic can vary. But like footballers, teachers can rely on the 'rules' remaining constant – all learners, for example, need extensive exposure to the target language, and benefit from opportunities to practise sustained, meaningful speaking (Ellis, 2005) – and improved proficiency is an objective for all students, even if it is not always the principal objective.

All teachers, then, share similar goals but need to be able to work within a variety of teaching contexts on the way to achieving those goals. Probably we immediately think of a typical classroom as the most obvious context, but teaching and learning can take place almost anywhere, particularly when digital technology is involved. We should also include here as part of the context not only *where* teaching and learning take place, but also *what* will be learned and any materials used to facilitate the process (the curriculum, materials and the resources), as well as *who* is involved (the number of participants, their background and motivation, knowledge and skills, etc.) and *how* this is done (the teaching approach, interaction patterns and techniques).

Two characteristics of teaching and learning contexts are particularly important, because they shape what teachers do when they teach. The first is that every teaching and learning context is different. This is true even if you teach the same students, in the same room, using the same coursebook, every day of the week. People will respond differently at different times to the same things, and in many ways this is what makes our profession so interesting and, at the same time, so challenging. The second is the fact that many aspects of context are usually outside the control of a teacher. For instance, we – Peter and Matthew – have visited schools and universities where students' desks are bolted to the floor, and students sit four or more on a shared bench; others where learners' parents sit at the back of the classroom during lessons and complain if they don't like what they see; and others where all books were replaced by tablet computers that later proved to be faulty. Such factors are the result of decisions made outside the walls of the classroom, attributable to individuals, to school culture, or to the wider social culture surrounding the institution. So the limitations on a teaching context often originate from beyond the walls of the classroom, but affect what goes on inside it.

### 119

#### CASE STUDY 1.1: MATTHEW

I remember my first teaching context quite clearly, a small private language school in London. Classrooms were small, with 12–16 adult students of various nationalities, who came for daily three-hour lessons. There was a coursebook that I had to use, but also a lot of freedom to select other materials and take advantage of being in London. Having a multilingual class of mixed nationalities presented fantastic opportunities for students to talk about their home countries and cultures, and because there was no shared first language, English was the natural way of doing that. So in several ways it was quite a gentle introduction to teaching! But there were challenges, too: each week new students joined the group while others left, resources were very limited, and I had 30 teaching hours a week, so there was very little time for professional development.



### TASK 1.1

#### From teacher ...

Think about your current teaching context and answer these questions:

- What does the context look like?
- Where are the teacher(s) and the student(s) located?
- What materials and resources are available? Are any mandatory?
- What materials and resources are *not* available?
- How much space and time is there for learning?
- What goals are there? Who set them?

If possible, share and compare your answers with another teacher's.

*For notes see page 211*

All this means that teachers constantly need to make choices as part of their work, and these choices should be based on their intentions for a particular lesson. In other words, teachers work within local limitations to select the *what* and *how* in order to achieve particular goals, while recognising that they may have little control over the *where* and *who*. Some of these choices can be made before the lesson starts, but others will be made during the lesson itself, in response to what unfolds in the classroom. As Jim Scrivener points out, 'all effective teaching requires an active moment-by-moment processing of the current situation and a flexible ever-changing reflection as to what might be the best thing to do next' (Scrivener, 2012, p. 2). So one view of teaching is as improvisation; an ongoing balancing act between the intended learning outcomes of the teacher and the opportunities and limitations presented by the teaching context. Unsurprisingly, then, a significant part of learning to teach 'involves understanding what the characteristics of the teaching context are and how they shape the nature of teaching and learning' (Richards & Farrell, 2011, p. 32).

Therefore it is essential that, as a trainer, you ensure your trainees are mindful of context as they develop their ideas about teaching. Even when training and subsequent teaching occur in much the same context, it isn't unusual for trainees to find that the reality of day-to-day teaching doesn't quite equate to what they experienced in the training room. Most of us have probably experienced this 'gap of applicability' (Freeman, 2009, p. 15) in our own training at some point, sitting in a workshop thinking 'nice idea, but it won't work in my classroom!' That's not to say that trainees shouldn't be encouraged to give new ideas due consideration, but it is also true that one size does not fit all, and all educators need to be aware of this. That applies to teachers as much as it does to trainers – Sharon Childs writes that:

While teacher education cannot prepare . . . [trainees] to be ready to teach in every context, it can prepare them to understand that context is a powerful mediator that can shape or be shaped by how they conceptualize teaching. It is incumbent on teacher professional development programs to ensure that teachers leave with this understanding. (Childs, 2011, p. 85)

In practice, this means encouraging trainees to consider how they can apply or adapt ideas, approaches, activities and techniques to their own specific context, usually through guided reflection (see Chapter 3).

One of the problems trainers face is that they may never see the precise contexts their trainees go on to work in, particularly if most of their work is with preservice trainees. As a trainer you may work with teachers in their own classrooms, you may work with them in a dedicated training venue, or you may deliver training online. Whatever your training situation, you will need to be mindful of your trainees' teaching contexts (or likely future teaching contexts) when you plan, deliver and give feedback as part of training activity. What may be highly effective in one context may be counterproductive in another. Adrian Doff suggests that 'most people involved in teacher education are aware of the existence of two separate worlds' (1996, p. 8), comparing well-resourced private teaching contexts with small class sizes to 'the world of most other teachers': those who work with large groups of students in state schools or universities, often with limited and out-of-date resources. This latter world is much larger, meaning that the teaching profession is primarily made up of teachers working in mainstream schools and universities, with relatively large groups of students. Globally, most teachers work in these more restricted environments, where syllabuses and materials are decided by committees, teachers' views are often not considered, and there is little opportunity for teachers (and their learners) to experiment. Evidently, approaches to training teachers for work in these diverse contexts must take such differences into account.

In addition to considering the trainees' teaching contexts, trainers have their own teaching and learning context to manage: the training room. This will have its own affordances and limitations to be aware of, but as a trainer you will need to consider how to best explore and exploit not only your training context, but your trainees' teaching contexts too. The vast differences that exist between Doff's 'two separate worlds' impact significantly on what teachers and students can and cannot do in the classroom. There is an equally significant impact on how teacher development might be structured, and on how appropriate and applicable ideas and methods are in one context versus another. As trainers of teachers, we need to be familiar with a wide range of teaching contexts in order to be confident and effective in our role.