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Emotional scaffolding in Adult Language Learning

Examples from courses for university administrative and technical staff

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Why we can't ignore the fact that……

«It's Friday»

- Reflective practice paper/reflective teaching (loosely defined)
- **Teacher is part of the context**

- My assumptions/my professional background/my development over time
- The context
- My thinking/reflection during the course (implications for my actions)
- How I worked with the context as it emerged (*Emergent Teaching*)
- Sharing of my thinking

Theoretical background

- ***Reflective Practice*** (Farrel, 2024)
- ***Language Teacher Development*** (Woodward, Graves and Freeman, 2018)
- ***Emotional scaffolding*** (Meyer and Turner, 2007)
- **«*Emergent Teaching*»**

- **Context and course description (1)**

- Two courses (B1 and B2)
- 40 hours over 5 months
- 1 two-hour lesson per week
- Approx 20 learners per group
- Administrative and technical university staff
- Part of official ongoing compulsory training

- **Context and course description (2)**

- CLT
- No fixed syllabus
- Courses took place «at work»
- Compulsory attendance
- No set/compulsory end of course test
- Participants all work for the university (permanent and temporary staff).

- **The B1 context and learner profile**

- Significant discrepancies in language learning experience and skills
- Participants similar in age and gender
- High motivation
- Don’t use English for work
- **High anxiety levels**
- Vulnerabilities
- «Lots of L1 chatter»
- «Lots of L2 mimicry»
- «**Noisy classroom**»

- **The B2 context and learner profile**

- Language level: similar learning background (with adjustments for age)
- High motivation
- Participants use English for work/current users
- Active and proactive
- **Fluency overflow**
- **Significant imbalance between fluency and accuracy**
- Lots of group language knowledge/competence

- **Emotional scaffolding**

- My immediate professional response

- Emotional scaffolding is achieved, in particular, through the building of **trust** and is centred around learner **well-being.**

- **Examples from the B1 course**

- Individual questionnaires (motivation, aims and language learning experience)
- Routine Individual interviews and check-ins
- Taking our time/decanting time
- Routinely talking about language learning strategies and anxiety management
- Being explicit about my approach and all activities
- **Lots of fun and games!**
- Emotional scaffolding in L1

- **Examples from the B2 course**

- Slow down (focus on accuracy challenge)
- Channelling of competence and know-how
- Diversifying homework activities
- AI challenge/lifting the bar
- Sharing of university specific knowledge

- **Actions/outcomes/additional reflection**
- Emotional scaffolding
- Creating a safe space for all
- Ample feedback opportunities
- Creating a sense of community (comunità accademica)
- Greater caution and awarenss in all of my teacher-learner interactions
- Do not be in a rush to go anywhere!
- Emergent teaching (taking my cue from the learners) – **go with the flow**
- **Learner agency**
- Should we be validating **collective knowledge** as well?

Recommendations

- Practicalities count: The **teaching room** is important (noise levels/acoustics)
- Institutional context and work-based relationships cannot be ignored
- Informal interaction opportunities are extremely useful (**long coffee breaks**)
- Include group **reflection on language learning and learner strategies**
- Vary pacing and provide alternative activities according to learner needs
- Exit test which reflects coursework and not a specific language level focus
- Make instructions and the process clear and easy to follow (**LMS**)

- **Reflections on my role as a Teacher**

- How do my actions reflect my take on Language Education, my background and my training?
- How do my conclusions reflect my own status as an “Mature Adult Teacher?”

After all……

“It’s Friday!”

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Thank you!

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