THE BENEFITS OF DEFFERENT CHATS LANGUAGE PRACTICE

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Annotation: In this article we will discuss the advantages of using text chat in ELT, recommend a website where learners and teacher can meet to text chat and provide outlines for using text chat activities.

Key words: Chat,feedback, instructional conversation, interactions.

Chat also has benefits in terms of learner output. The slowing down of turn taking gives learners more time to plan what they want to say, leading to more accurate production, greater risk-taking and exclusive use of the target language . In addition, the anonymity of text chat means shy students feel more confident, resulting in greater participation .

Considering these many benefits, I set out to design a range of text chat tasks to use with my students. As with traditional communicative tasks, it was essential that the tasks were engaging, personalized, relevant and presented learners with a reason to communicate. I also had to find a safe and controlled environment where teachers and students could text chat. Our students use a wide range of text chat programs and apps in their daily communication: Facebook Messenger, Whats App, Viber, and Skype, to name a few. However, using these in our classes presents two key issues. Firstly, we cannot guarantee that everyone in class, teacher included, uses the same program. Secondly, students have a right to privacy and we should avoid forcing them to share personal contact details.

After some head-scratching and Internet forum discussion, I found a solution to this problem in Todaysmeet.com. Todays Meet is a free backchannel chat platform designed for classroom use, which allows teachers to create temporary chat rooms which students can then join by typing the room's Web address

When carrying out text chat tasks, the teacher can put students into pairs (or groups) and create a chat room for each pair – these can be displayed on the whiteboard for later reference. Each student is then given an iPad and sits on a different table from their partner. They type the URL of their pair's chat room, write their name in the nickname box and join the room. Students do not need an account to do this. The teacher can also join the rooms in order to copy and paste in task instructions, monitor chats, or provide corrective feedback. By opening multiple tabs on the classroom computer the teacher can follow all of the chats.

Teachers will find that with a little adaptation many of their favourite communicative activities can be carried out via text chat. Below I provide three text chat tasks that teachers could use with their students. They have been adapted from traditional pair work activities. I also suggest some ways that chat scripts can be used conveniently to conduct delayed feedback.

This is a useful activity to familiarize students with using text chat in the classroom and is a good warmer to use before moving onto a second chat task. The teacher begins the activity by eliciting topics that students would ask someone about when they meet for the first. Next, the teacher assigns each student a partner from a different table. Students spend ten minutes asking each other GTKY questions via text chat.
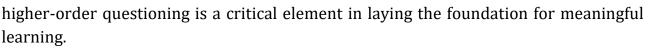
This activity requires students to identify the differences in two spot-the-difference pictures. The teacher divides students into two groups. They give one group Picture A and the other Picture B. Before the text chat, they can prepare by discussing what they see in their picture with a student from their group while the teacher monitors to help with any unknown vocabulary.

The teacher then assigns each student a partner from the other group and explains that there pictures are slightly different and that students will need to identify the differences by describing and asking about the pictures. Useful language can be also elicited onto the board (for example, prepositions; is/are + there). The teacher then hands out the iPads and displays the Web addresses of their Todays Meet chat rooms. Students perform the task, circling any differences they discover on their picture.

In this activity students perform a text chat role play. Half of the class have been recently rescued from a desert island and the other half are journalists given the job of interviewing them. Before the text chat begins, the survivors get together in small groups (face-to-face) and develop the story of their time on the island. The journalists also work together, coming up with interesting questions to ask the survivor. The teacher monitors, providing assistance as needed. After five minutes' preparation, students perform the interview on text chat.

Teachers know it is not enough to be proficient in the subject area they are teaching. They also must have an understanding of pedagogy, or how students learn, particularly across the diverse learning environments we see today. A key strength is the ability to employ instructional strategies that engage students in academic discourse. In order to assess what students are thinking, we have to get them talking. This strategy is instrumental in the development of academic vocabulary for all students, especially English learners.

Thus, there is a call for professional development that guides teachers, and in turn students, in redefining their roles in the development of knowledge . Providing teachers with professional learning in the use of instructional conversations and

higher-order questioning is a critical element in laying the foundation for meaningful learning.

How do peer-conversations about a student's approach to a problem or conjecture regarding an idea develop critical thinking skills? What constitutes meaningful discourse? Is it possible to effectively increase understanding and engagement by delivering instruction through a student-centered dialogue model? In this article, we investigate the role that conversation plays throughout instruction toward building teacher capacity and student self-efficacy in subject matter knowledge.

To effectively meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse population of learners, we must employ a student-centered approach to teaching and learning that not only relays instructional content, but also engages students in authentic activities that elicit disciplinary discourse to construct knowledge .

Carpenter proposed that students who only know what has been taught to them, without any relevant connections or meaning, will not have the capacity to apply what they have learned in new situations. This transfer of knowledge is what has been lacking for far too long in the areas of comprehension and retention.
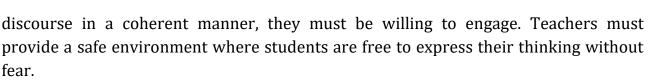
The goal of instruction is to prepare students to be problem solvers with the ability to overcome unforeseeable challenges. Therefore, we must provide an environment where students are willing to engage in conversations that allow them to communicate their ideas. Teachers' awareness of students' knowledge can more thoroughly support meaningful learning and critical thinking .Unfortunately, in the traditional classroom, students are not linguistically involved in the lesson. They are the receivers of information, rarely producing opinions or suppositions. Without student voice, teachers cannot readily assess their level of understanding.

Instructional conversation is a form of a discussion-based lesson that develops students' conceptual and linguistic skills through guided discourse where all students are held accountable for participation. Students engage in scaffolded exchanges with their peers and the instructor to communicate their personal understandings and negotiate meaning of content on various levels. This use of student conversations supports the students' development of academic language and vocabulary. Teachers seek opportunities to reinforce correct pronunciation, definitions and speech patterns by modeling paraphrases of student responses to guided questions .

These interactions also provide valuable assessment data that reveal errors in reasoning, computation or logic.

As Johnson, describe: "Substantive conversations require considerable interaction that is on task and involves higher order thinking processes during the negotiation process (i.e., drawing conclusions, challenging ideas, asking questions). The discussion can have guidance but is not completely scripted or controlled by the teacher." Active involvement of all students is necessary to promote an improved collective understanding of the content. In order for students to generate authentic

discourse in a coherent manner, they must be willing to engage. Teachers must provide a safe environment where students are free to express their thinking without fear.

The use of the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) model also aids in increasing student confidence (Goldsmith, 2013). This form of turn-and-talk occurs after a teacher poses a question, when students then pause and think about their reply, pair up with a partner, and then share their responses with each other. The affective filter is lowered, and students are able to engage in a short discussion free from the eyes and ears of the rest of the class. Once the students are brought back together, they all have had the opportunity to fine tune their answer. Students who are still hesitant when called upon will have the support of their partner.

Providing students with multiple opportunities to discuss ideas with fellow students promotes peer-supported strategic thinking. Finding the "right" answer becomes secondary to discovering the process or reasoning behind a concept. The integration of this method of instruction with academically rich vocabulary and higher-order questioning is especially effective with English learners.

Teachers using substantive conversations encourage students to bring to mind their own ideas and views of a topic before engaging in rich dialogue with their peers to identify common understandings and key information, and addressing any confusion about the problem. This method of inquiry enables students to collectively think through a problem before actually beginning to solve it.

For example, a pair of chemistry students might hypothesize possible outcomes of an investigation before conducting the experiment. They scrutinize the problem as a doctor might examine a patient before determining treatment. Students learn to look for clues regarding how to approach a task or problem. They are able to view the work before them from a situational perspective, considering the academic vocabulary involved and call on prior experiences to generate solutions.

Conversation plays a vital role in the modern cycle of instruction. In order for students to begin thinking like scholars, they must be placed in an environment that supports a community of practice that operates according to scholarly behaviors. Professional learning activities for teachers must include strategies that effectively increase engagement, critical thinking, and dialogue as methods of developing student agency.

Providing students with numerous opportunities to contribute to thought-provoking discussions surrounding content increases student participation and willingness to present their ideas related to topics of instruction. Moreover, as teachers improve their capacity for using higher-order questions to guide student discourse, they also are able to more readily perceive student misconceptions and redirect students with questions that allow them to revisit their thinking, dialogue with their peers, and choose a different approach or conclusion .

As a text chat conversation proceeds messages are automatically saved, and participants have access to an instant visual record of the on-going conversation. They can scroll backwards at any time to reread previous messages without hindering the flow of the conversation. Therefore not only is the conversation more visually salient, it is also enduring. The need to read and type messages also slows down turn taking leading to what Beauvois called 'conversation in slow motion'.

There is significant evidence that the saliency and enduring nature of text chat, and the slower turn taking it affords, facilitates the 'noticing' that Schmidt argued was necessary for second language acquisition. Learners participating in text chat have frequently been found to re-read previous messages, notice inconsistencies in their target language output and self-correct . Research has also shown increased learner-noticing of feedback in a text chat environment .

With the rise of mobile technology and social networks, text chat has become a common means of communicating for many around the world. With the aid of smartphones and tablets, we can text chat with friends whenever and wherever we like. We use it every day and, more importantly, our students do too. By giving our learners language practice in a text-chat environment, we can help them develop an important real world skill. And the benefits of using text chat in our classes do not stop there. Over the last decade computer-assisted language learning (CALL) research has identified a number of ways in which communicative tasks performed using text chat facilitate second-language learning. In this article I will discuss the advantages of using text chat in ELT, recommend a website where learners and teacher can meet to text chat and provide outlines for using text chat activities. For the purposes of this article I have assumed that teachers have access to a classroom computer and a class set of tablet devices, such as iPads, or laptops. However if this proves not to be the case, teachers can consider asking their leaners to bring a device (smartphone or tablet) to class.

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