

Models and Metaphors in Language Teacher Training

Loop input and
other strategies

Tessa Woodward

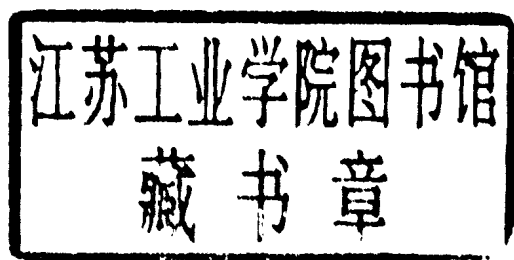
CAMBRIDGE TEACHER TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT

Series Editors: Marion Williams and Tony Wright

Models and Metaphors in Language Teacher Training

Loop input and other strategies

Tessa Woodward



To Mum and Pete

An earlier version of Part One of this book, entitled *Loop Input*, was originally published by Pilgrims Publications, Canterbury, England. In this Cambridge University Press volume, Part One has been considerably reorganised and revised; Part Two is completely new.

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1991

The law allows a reader to make a single copy of part of a book for purposes of private study. It does not allow the copying of entire books or the making of multiple copies of extracts. Written permission for any such copying must always be obtained from the publisher in advance.

First published 1991
Fifth printing 1997

Printed in the United Kingdom by
Athenaeum Press Ltd, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear

Library of Congress catalogue card number 90 - 1578

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Woodward, Tessa
Models and metaphors in language teaching training: loop input and other strategies – (Cambridge teacher training and development).

1. Language teachers. Professional education

I. Title

407

ISBN 0 521 37418 9 hard covers

ISBN 0 521 37773 0 paperback

WD

Models and Metaphors in Language Teacher Training

CAMBRIDGE TEACHER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Series Editors: Marion Williams and Tony Wright

This series is designed for all those involved in language teacher training and development: teachers in training, trainers, directors of studies, advisers, teachers of in-service courses and seminars. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive, organised and authoritative resource for language teacher training and development.

Teach English – A training course for teachers

by Adrian Doff

Models and Metaphors in Language Teacher Training –

Loop input and other strategies

by Tessa Woodward

This title was prepared with Roger Bowers as series editor.

Training Foreign Language Teachers – A reflective approach

by Michael J. Wallace

Literature and the Language Learner – A guide for teachers and trainers

Thanks

I would like to thank the following groups and individuals very much indeed, in chronological order:

- The teachers on the Royal Society of Arts Diploma for Overseas Teachers' Course – for understanding and enjoying so many experiments from 1983 to 1985.
- Mario Rinvulcri – for asking me to write a book and then making me 'go and talk to the man from CUP!'
- Seth Lindstromberg – for his patience and faith and typing.
- The Arrow 'family' – for such generous cooperation especially in the matters of the Blue Book and the disks.
- Roger Bowers – for making me write more and more, and for learning to like my diagrams.
- Annemarie Young – for putting up with being badgered over the telephone.
- Alison Silver – for her sensitivity and diplomacy.
- Colleagues and friends who have sustained me in important ways through the years before this book finally came out.

Acknowledgements

The author and publishers are grateful to the authors, publishers and others who have given permission for the use of copyright material identified in the text. It has not been possible to identify the sources of all the material used and in such cases the publishers would welcome information from copyright owners.

Heinemann Publishers (Oxford) Ltd for the extract from *Discover English* by R. Bolitho and B. Tomlinson on p. 10; Cordon Art for the Möbius Strip by Escher on p. 14 © 1990 M. C. Escher Heirs / Cordon Art, Baarn, Holland; Basic Books Inc. and Scott Kim for 'Figure-figure' on p. 15 from *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* by Douglas Hofstadter, copyright © 1979 by Basic Books Inc.; Oxford University Press for the extract from *A Training Course for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language* by P. Hubbard et al. (1983) on pp. 85–6; Longman Group UK Ltd for the adapted illustration and exercises on p. 120 from *Guided Composition Exercises* by D. H. Spencer.

Contents

Thanks	<i>page</i> vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
PART ONE	
1. Essentials	4
2. Mind maps and using texts	21
3. Dictations	30
4. How to prepare and run a loop-input session	43
5. Classroom management	50
6. No name	61
7. Being a beginner and starting again	68
8. Partial loops and drills (a partial loop)	74
9. The use of models	83
10. Role play	88
11. Student talking time	94
12. Vocabulary	96
13. Reading mazes	105
14. Teaching listening	112
15. Transfer	117
16. Evaluation	123
17. The last chapter in Part One	129
PART TWO	
Introduction to Part Two	138
18. Ways of thinking and talking about training	139
19. External parameters of teacher training courses	163
20. Matching process to other training variables	180
21. The evaluation of effectiveness	211
Conclusion to Part Two	237
Conclusion to the whole book	239
Bibliography	240
Index	244

Introduction

Who is this book for?

- For any modern language teacher trainer, whether you have the title ‘teacher trainer’, have your own office, have special training and extra pay, whether you are called something else such as ‘inspector’, ‘director of studies’ or ‘principal’ or whether you are the sort of teacher that people turn to in the staffroom in moments of pre- and post-lesson panic.
- For anyone planning or running a pre- or in-service workshop or course.
- For groups of teachers wanting to share ideas in informal and less institutional settings.
- For teachers and teacher trainees who have been through or are undergoing the process of training and who are interested in how it can be done.
- For lecturers interested in getting away from a lecture-based approach to training.
- For trainers in any field who are interested in the *how* of training as well as the *what*.

What is the book about?

The book is about the process of training language teachers. One particular process option is described in close practical detail in Part One, and in Part Two there is broader discussion of how we classify and define teacher training events, the parameters surrounding them, the matching of process options to parameters, and, finally, how we can evaluate any process experiments we might make. In simpler language, Part One is about loop input, and Part Two is about what’s inside the trainer’s head (mental schemata), what’s outside the trainer’s head (parameters), juggling the inside with the outside (making process choices), and what the experiments are worth (evaluation).

How is the book organised?

The book is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the idea of loop input gradually, so that by the end of Part One the reader will be able to plan, run, assess and adapt training sessions in this new way. This first

part is practical and informal, and gives many ideas in sufficient detail for you to use them in the training room immediately if you want to. The reader stops reading, takes an idea from the book, tries it out in the training room, and eventually comes home to do some more reading. Part One is also interactive in a more conventional manner, with plenty of opportunities for readers to stop and think or join in with the process of the book. Part Two takes a broader perspective and a wider view of process and training generally.

Why is the book organised in this way?

In some training sessions, the steps of the session are carefully explained first so that nothing happens that participants have not been warned about or told the rationale for. So, there is introduction, and talk, and explanation first. The doing comes second. At the beginning of a course run like this, there will be 'welcomes' and 'introductions of personnel', timetables will be handed out, and the structure of the course outlined. There will then, perhaps, be an explanation of how important it is for people in the group to get to know each other, and an underlining of the importance of experiencing things first hand. After this careful, step-by-step introduction, after an hour or so of talking through, the group may be invited to do a warm-up. They may stand or sit and start to talk. The room will start to buzz with voices.

In other training sessions, the activity will be experienced first. There might be a brief word from the trainer as an introduction, but within minutes of the session opening people will be moving about and talking. They will do the activity first and talk about it later. This basic choice of 'explain first' or 'do first' can be made by the trainer or, once the trainees have tried both ways, put to the trainees so that they can express their preferences.

In this book I had a similar choice to make. There are two parts to the book, and one is highly practical and interactive. I had to decide which part to put first. I have decided to invite you to plunge straight in. I want to share with you a particular vision of training, first of all. I know that you will have your own ways of training. So, just as we might all come together in a room at a conference or on a trainers' course, we are, in fact all meeting via this book. This book will be our shared experience. I'd like to invite you to join me in Part One, so that I can share with you some things that I have found useful. Then, in Part Two, we can slow down a bit and discuss things more widely.

The wonderful thing about meeting via a book, rather than meeting at a conference or on a course, is that you can, if you wish, choose to read Part Two first. If you are the sort of person who likes broad background time to think, and explanation before demonstration, then you might wel

want to read Part Two first. It's up to you. But I'll take the 'experience first' people straight on to Chapter 1.

Within Part One I have taken a course of action mid-way between the choices outlined above by setting out some information in the first chapter. If you are a 100% 'experience first' person, then dive straight in at Chapter 2.

Finer details

a) *References*

As you read through the book you will meet small figures, for example ¹. At the end of the chapter you will meet the number again and you will sometimes find a single reference to an individual, an article or a book, and you will sometimes find a group of books all on a related topic, in case you want to do further background reading.

b) *Style*

In Part One you will find many contracted forms such as *don't*, *I've*, and *they'll*. I have used them because they are natural and because they allow me to express emphasis in a natural way, by simply decontracting as in *I do not mean*.

Throughout the book, I usually refer to the teacher and the trainer as 'she'. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the majority of teachers, and many trainers, are women. Secondly, very few books use the pronoun *she* to denote women at all or women in mixed groups (that is, *he*, etc. is used in these cases). The usage in this book is thus designed to be a refreshing change.

PART ONE

1 Essentials

A FEW TERMS

Content and process

Regardless of which particular combination of course type, trainee type and trainer you are involved with, two things will be especially important to you if you are going to train teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) or people thinking about entering the field. One is *content*, that is, what information, skills or knowledge are to be taught or learnt. The other is *process*, that is, how this information or knowledge is going to be taught or learnt, or, in other words, what 'vehicle' will be used to 'convey' the content.

I will be saying very little about *content* in this book. It will only be discussed in Part One when different ways of training are being exemplified or explained. I am interested here primarily in the different ways of eliciting, sharing, conveying and working with information, skills and knowledge in a language teacher training context. These different ways I call *process options*.

Process options

There are many different process options available, but very few teachers, trainers or lecturers have themselves been trained in using a variety of options or, in fact, in using even one to its fullest potential. There are very few courses or books available to help a trainer who decides that, for example, simply lecturing is not enough. It is often the case then that trainers work from a store of old process models gained from their own experience as students, plus a few ideas gleaned from colleagues, conferences and their own creativity. This may lead to the trainer overusing a rather thin repertoire of techniques. There will be nothing wrong in the techniques themselves but there may be ways of varying them and more appropriate techniques to choose from to accomplish the aims of a particular training session.

If this is the case, then two types of work are necessary. One is a compilation and discussion of already existing techniques and the other is the development of new techniques.

I would like to tell you about a new set of training strategies called *loop input*. It's not right for all people in all situations, but it represents a fresh option for those interested in widening their range of training choices. Trainers reading this book will already have repertoires of their own and I wouldn't want them to lay these repertoires aside just because they meet a new idea. If experimenting with process is new to you then trying loop input may feel strange or exciting at first, but after a while it may find a place in your repertoire. Trying out an unfamiliar process and taking it on board may lead you to look for other processes and to your developing your own. Our professional pool will then be richer.

Before I start explaining what loop input is, and how it works, I'll cover some background.

The EFL teacher training group: different roles and levels

Because there are so many groups involved in EFL teacher training, and in order to avoid confusion when writing about the various roles and classrooms, I will use the terms in Figure 1 *The stack* throughout this book. The terms are explained below.

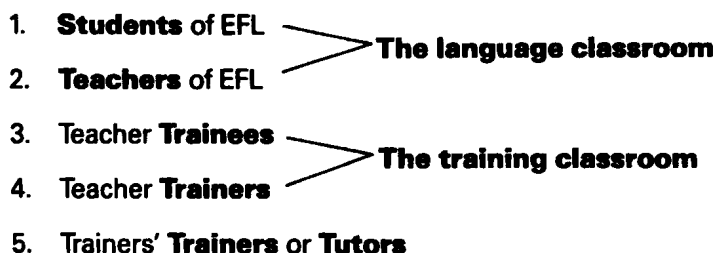


Figure 1 *The stack*

Much training work is done with experienced in-service groups of teachers. One would not normally refer to these teachers as *trainees*, but for ease of reference in this book and to distinguish between times when the experienced teacher is actually teaching a language class and other times when she is attending a training seminar, the term *trainee* will be used to cover any person at a seminar or on a course whether they be experienced or inexperienced, employed as a teacher or not. Thus we have a chain with five links, or a stack with five levels.

The first point I'd like to make is that any individual can belong to different levels of the stack at the same time, e.g. a trainee could be a non-native speaker of English and thus a student of EFL at the 'same' time as training. A trainer can be an EFL teacher and a tutor and a student of, say, Japanese at the 'same' time. In other words, a person in the EFL teacher training stack can have, in fact usually does have, more than one role or one face at a time. Alexia, shall we say, is a part-time EFL teacher. Her

classes are on Wednesday and Friday morning. She also attends a teacher training course on Thursday evenings. Thus, she has two different roles a week in her EFL world.

The second important point is that any one person in the stack can learn from any other person in the stack. The stack is an expression of roles and organisational complexity. It is not meant to imply status differences. As lines in stacks are often interpreted hierarchically, however, I have attempted to disturb this image by putting the student at the top (the one who pays the most?) and the tutor at the bottom (the one who earns the most?). The point of the diagram is simply to remind us of who is involved, to give each role a simple name so that terms are clear throughout the book, and to show that we all have multiple roles and so can learn from each other.

Trainees and students

TRAINEES

There are important differences in confidence, status and language awareness between native and non-native trainees. Non-native trainees may be wary of expressing themselves in the target language in the training classroom or may consciously use the training sessions as language improvement sessions too. Thus they may be working on their teaching techniques and language ability at the same time.

It's easy to forget, however, how ill at ease some native speakers are when writing out their thoughts. This lack of ease may show up, for example, in the number of times you redraft an important letter, or in an inability to start writing on a blank sheet paper. A particularly bad example comes from this piece of homework, unsolicited, handed in by a young man on a pre-service teacher training course held at a British adult education college. The trainee took great care to correct the mistakes and handed it in a second time with most of the original mistakes changed but not necessarily rectified. Thus 'on there own' became 'on thier own' and finally 'on three own'. Here is an excerpt from his work:

Ice-breakers

This i feel was very important, as we were all strangers, i feel the combination of the two games was just enough, three i think would of been too many, the breaking of the ice was skillfully done, you got to know a little about a lot of people, but most importantly there names, and of course putting faces to the names.

This would be a good idea for foreign language students if it was written down in thire language with maybe the English version next to it, and being left on three own to go around and ask questions.

STUDENTS

Despite individual and group differences in language awareness and interests, there are some parallels between students and trainees.

—————▶ Students in the language classroom

—————▶ Trainees in the training classroom

Both groups are studying something and thus are in a room with other people who they may or may not like. They have to do homework and suffer having it corrected. Members of either group may be motivated or uninterested. Being at different levels in the stack at any one moment, however, they may have a different viewpoint of the proceedings. The more students are helped with study skills to get the most out of input methods, and the more trainees are helped to improve their input methods, the more the two parallel lines will represent mirrors reflecting each other's interests, as mirror images of each other's concerns.

Using the parallels

Trainers often capitalise on the parallels between trainees and students. They do this in five main ways:

- a) Trainers might ask trainees to take part in the 'ball game for names' (Frank and Rinvoluceri, 1983), for example, as a warm-up at the start of their course. After the game has been played, some names learnt, and the ice broken a little, trainees will often be encouraged to discuss the game, its advantages and disadvantages, the language that's needed by students in order to play it in the target language, the equipment needed and so on. They might be asked to remember their feelings (of newness, or forgetting, of fun) and to try to recall them later in their own classes so that they can empathise better with their students. In this way, trainees remain trainees, with their own needs (e.g. to get to know each other's names) and statuses, but a game is borrowed from the students' line in the stack simply because it fits the situation.
- b) Trainees might be asked to play a game taken from EFL teaching, and be required to play the game in a language foreign to them all. Thus the 'Find someone who . . . ' game might be played in French, if you happen to have native English-speaking trainees who know a little French. For example:

Cherchez quelqu'un(e) qui a | une bicyclette
 | un chat
 | une maison à la campagne
 | une amie japonnaise, etc.

Here, the trainees are required to suspend disbelief for a while and change from the trainee level in the stack, pretending that they now belong to the students' level. In computer language, they are required to *push*, i.e. to suspend operations on the task they are currently engaging in, which is learning to be EFL teachers, without forgetting where they are, and to take up a new task, which is practising French. The new task is usually said to be on a lower level than the first task. Once this second lower level task is completed they *pop* back up to the first level again, i.e. they resume their previous roles as trainees and go on as before, discussing the relative merits and demerits of the exercise. This is a simple kind of recursion.

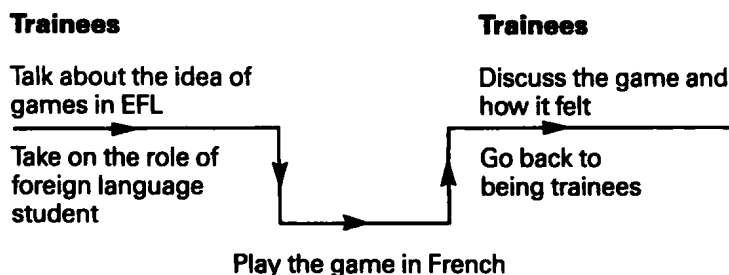


Figure 2 *Push and pop*

A little time is necessary to allow trainees to understand that they are *popping* or leaving one role and taking on another. Time is necessary, too, on their return to their own role after the exercise. Unless the time is taken and the process made overt, trainees are liable to suffer confusion over who they are supposed to be at any one time. To take the metaphor of deep sea diving, going down or coming up too fast can give you 'the bends'.

Pushing and *popping* are terms I gained from Douglas Hofstadter (1979)¹. Leaving one role, and entering another for a time, represents a valid way of capitalising on the parallels in the situation between student and trainee. The example of the 'find someone who' game, however, is rather artificial since the trainees probably don't really want to learn French, at least at that time, nor are they likely to learn much from a quick, sample exposure. Aleksandra Golebiowska (1985) has argued that the experience provided by this foreign language (FL) learning 'simulation' is less than valid since: (a) the motivation experienced by the trainee is different from that of the real FL learner, (b) the frustration caused by this change of roles so early in a course can be counter-productive, (c) the novelty of FL lessons soon wears off, (d)

the time could be better spent discussing the difficulties of learning English rather than learning another language, and (e) one lesson can never characterise a whole teaching/learning process. (Her article does contain some interesting suggestions, however, for helping trainees to experience what it's like to be learning English, rather than any other language.)

- c) A less artificial extension of the above point comes from Argondizzo et al. (1986/7). They suggest taking games and activities often used in the foreign language classroom, but instead of changing the language they change the content. Thus, the game above now looks like this:

Find someone who	can name the phases of the lesson can define <i>mentalism</i> can explain <i>pre-lexis</i> etc.
------------------	--

Here, the trainees can see how the game operates and feel some of the advantages and disadvantages by actually experiencing it, but they also get time to review some of the content of their own training syllabus. They stay on the trainee line of the stack and do not take on the phoney role of language student, but simply borrow the frame of a game used at the student level.

- d) Another idea that uses the similarities between the roles of individuals at different levels of the stack is what could be called *open process*. Here, the trainers open up their course to the extent that they make visible to the trainees all the constraints and decision-making procedures that they engage in. They take the wraps off their own level of the stack and make public their own concerns. Thus, a trainer might say, 'at this point in the course we have a choice. We could either hammer away at "concept check questions" for another week, until we feel you've got it, or we could leave it and come back to it in the hope that the dust will have settled in your minds and that there will be less confusion. All the trainers met yesterday and we decided to come back to "concept check questions" later because . . .'

Trainers can also take the wraps off their ongoing decision-making processes. For example, a colleague told me of a time when he was asked, 'Why did you sit on the floor to tell the story?' and found himself answering, 'Because I had to bring you closer to me (it was a very large room, with the chairs all round the walls) and I wanted you to do it quickly, which meant coming without the chairs and sitting on the floor with me.'

Trainees are not invited to join in the decision making but are 'viewing' it and can ask questions about it. They can relate this to decisions they have to make as teachers. No change in level is required. One level simply takes its clothes off and has an X-ray, so that another level can see its internal workings better. Trainees attempt to store the