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FROM TRAINING TO PRACTICE: A MONTH OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH WITH C5+O.N.E. ED IN ALMATY

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Abstract. This article reflects *personal* professional growth, development in teaching skills, insights, and changes in 5 teaching aspects gained during C5+O.N.E Ed (Opening Networks through English) teacher training program conducted and being conducted presently in 3 phases, the 2nd of which took place in person in July of 2025 in Almaty, Kazakhstan within 5 countries of Central Asia, including 20 teacher trainers from World Learning and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. The paper, additionally, recommends ways and methods to make classrooms more engaging and student-centered rather than traditional lecturing and teacher-talking atmosphere.

Keywords: C5+O.N.E. Ed; Almaty; student-centered classroom; professional development; instruction giving; ICQs; CCQs; time-management; scaffolding.

Introduction. Globalization is one of the key factors of why university students are in greater demand of developing their communicative language than ever before. In order to create the atmosphere of learner engagement actively in classrooms, EFL teachers are supposed to develop continuously to keep up with the pace of technology and modern era generation. One of the opportunities was made possible by World Learning organization in cooperation with U.S. Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan Teachers of English Association. The C5 + O.N.E. Ed program aims to

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create a cohort of highly qualified English language teachers who can teach English in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as in the C5 + O.N.E. and English Access Scholarship Programs (World Learning, 2024). C5+O.N.E. Ed includes 3 phases: the first includes online training, in groups of 20 participants with 2 trainers, in-country support from Program Assistants; the second in person phases includes in-person, month-long intensive workshops, micro-teaching, English clubs and clinics, lesson planning; finally, the third including ongoing support in organizing professional development activities by networking. This program brings together 200 teachers and 20 teacher trainers from World Learning and Georgetown University in Washington, DC, to enhance teaching skills and English proficiency. Through a combination of online courses, a month-long intensive in-person workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and ongoing mentoring, participants will gain expertise in communicative language teaching, student-centered methods, technology integration, and more.

The paper highlights changes and results in 5 aspects of personal teaching experience gained through 4 months on distant training and 1 month in person training on the following topics:

- Communicative language teaching
- Student-centered teaching
- Project-based learning
- Use of technology for teaching and learning
- Lesson planning and assessment
- Improving English level
- Organizing professional development activities

Instruction giving. It is crucial for English language learners to know *how* to do things rather than the *final product*. Rosenshine believes students learn best when

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teachers are clear and supportive. He emphasizes explaining tasks step by step, showing examples, and checking understanding along the way. When instructions are simple and structured, students feel more confident, make fewer mistakes, and are more successful in their learning (2012). After learning and practicing ways of giving effective instruction I have successfully started to realize the difference between an ambiguous request and clear step-by-step instructions and how to apply the latter in my classrooms. To create a clear vision:

1: Ineffective instruction

“Read the text and do the task.”

Example 2: Effective instruction

“First, read the text and underline three main ideas. Then, answer questions 1–3 in full sentences. I will do the first one as an example. You have 10 minutes.”

In the first example the teacher gives no clear goal, no steps, and no example. Students feel confused and are unsure what is expected. On the other hand, the latter shows plain ways to accomplish the task.

ICQs. In order to reach a maximum result of the target task, it stands important to check the given instruction, which leads to the next section of ICQs (instruction checking questions). By asking students their comprehension of the steps, teacher can make sure the correct procedure of the lesson plan and realizing goals set for the class. The C5+O.N.E Ed program materials and practice sessions made it possible to experience a wide range of phrases to check the comprehension of instructions, before which I had explained the task and immediately started the timer. I *assumed* understanding. These small changes prevent students from confusion and boosts their independence. The following are examples for short, but practical phrases to use before starting the timer:

- Are you writing or speaking?

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- Show me your partner
- How many minutes do you have?
- Are you working alone or in a group?
- Is it possible to use the browser?

CCQs. The most often unprofessional step taken by instructors would be giving the correct answers immediately without letting the students analyze and find the “treasure” independently. Concept-checking questions (CCQs) must be developed as literally an instinct in the classrooms to constantly foster analytical and critical thinking in students’ minds. Primarily, CCQs significantly enhance the comprehension of grammar and vocabulary. Also, they increase the learner’s motivation (Rabani, Nakhaee and Aliahmadi Pour, 2024). A simple example would be related to Present Perfect Tense, which is one of the most challenging topics among EFL learners.

Teacher: *I've been living in Tashkent for five years.*

Teacher: *Am I living in Tashkent now?*

Students: Yes.

Teacher: *Did I start living here in the past?*

Students: Yes.

Teacher: *Do we know exactly when I started?*

Students: No.

Additionally, the *use* of vocabulary in a context is much more important than the meaning and form. Quality CCQs might assist in delivering the clear meaning. For, instance:

Teacher: *If I borrow a pen, is it mine forever?*

Students: No.

Teacher: *Do I give something or take something?*

Students: Take.

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Teacher: Will I return it later?

Students: Yes.

Time-management. Normally, educational institutions strictly follow the syllabus designed for the whole semester. Not only the responsible teachers, but also students might experience stress over not keeping up with the topics targeted. The practical micro-teaching sessions and group-teaching hours in the second phase of the program improved personal time-management skills, as in every session experienced trainer and peer teachers kept giving feedbacks on live classes. Here are some simple, yet practical tips for every EFL teacher to use in their classrooms:

1. Set clear time limits for each activity.

Tell students exactly how many minutes they have and write it on the board. This keeps tasks focused and reduces off-task behavior.

2. Give clear, short instructions before starting

Check understanding with quick CCQs so students don't waste time asking what to do once the activity has begun.

3. Use routines and predictable lesson stages

When students know the order (warm-up - practice - speaking - feedback), transitions become faster and smoother.

4. Stop activities on time, even if unfinished

These trains students to work efficiently and helps you stay on schedule without rushing important parts of the lesson.

Scaffolding. The term scaffolding comes from a constructing process, where builders and engineers use to *assist* and *guide* the tower. In case of learners, these installations would in the form of **starting phrases, samples and modeling**. This method is based on the short skeleton "I do, we do, you do", which, eventually, enables students to

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become independent performers. In legal English classes, for instance, the language frames would be:

1. Stating a legal rule

“According to ___ law/article ___, ___ is defined as ___.”

2. Referring to evidence or facts

“The facts of the case show that ___, which indicates that ___.”

3. Making a legal argument

“It can be argued that ___ because ___; therefore, ___.”

4. Concluding or giving a judgment

“Based on the evidence and applicable law, it may be concluded that ___.”

Similar scaffolding strategies might help build independent learner skills by shifting the responsibilities from teacher to student, allowing success by complex tasks (Sandholtz, Ringstaff and Dwyer, 2018).

Student-centered learning. All sections explained above serve teachers as a great tool to create a student-learning atmosphere, reducing the teacher-talking time and switching to student-talking lessons. In our era, learners have great opportunities to listen and receive information from digital sources, where they need more space to *practice*. If teachers are able to create this space more often, the effectiveness of CLT would increase likewise.

Conclusion. In general, effective classroom elements like clear instruction giving, the use of ICQs and CCQs, time-management and scaffolding play a crucial role in developing student learning. Research shows that when teachers provide structured support, check comprehension and gradually transfer responsibility to learners, students become more independent and confident. These strategies save time, avoid confusion, create meaningful experience. C5+O.N.E. Ed program was successful to improve teaching skills of many young educators, including me. Thanks to the professionally

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designed syllabus, main elements of quality English teaching were delivered in forms of workshops, micro and group teaching. For EFL and content-based classrooms alike, purposeful scaffolding and well-planned instruction are not optional techniques but essential components of high-quality teaching that support learner success and long-term academic development.

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