It's Not a Simulation, It's Real!

Judy Kollar

The English section of the federal government's Advanced Language Training Program puts andragogy into action. One way is an authentic weekly review and planning meeting, in which francophone managers and professionals practice all four language skills while participating in the management of their own learning.

The Meeting

The meeting is a valuable tool for putting this belief into practice. The weekly meeting provides an opportunity to review the issues of the past week and plan the week(s) ahead. It is a forum for sharing information, brainstorming ideas, and making decisions and solving problems. It permits learners and teachers to work together as partners on a team.

This meeting occurs every Friday afternoon when a class of advanced learners of English gets together with its teachers to discuss the week's business. The students and teachers are part of an intensive immersion program that involves seven and a half hours of classes and activities daily over a 16-week period. The students are francophone public servants, managers, and professionals from a wide range of fields and government departments. They share a common goal: to develop a high level of functional proficiency in their second "official" language, English.

The meeting is based on andragogical principles in its orientation and approach and encourages the growth of self-reliance and autonomy. The program is based on an intensive curriculum in its orientation and approach.

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Both students and teachers propose agenda items which can span a wide range of topics. Past meetings have included discussions on the heating problem in the classroom, an exchange on learning plateaus and class morale, student input and feedback on the course schedule, comments on the workload, information on community events, decisions on guest speakers and group socio-cultural activities, and many other topics. (See Appendix 1.)

The meeting allows learners and teachers to work closely together in a climate of trust and cooperation. All participants have a chance to listen and be heard, and most importantly, they have the sense of being valued members of a team. Each student has the opportunity to assume the roles of chairperson, minutes secretary and meeting participant. In addition to participating in the meeting, one of the teachers is specifically assigned to work with the chairperson and secretary. The following section describes the steps followed by the chairperson, secretary, and teacher before, during and after each meeting.

The Chairperson

Pre-Meeting

A few days prior to the weekly meeting, the chairperson and teacher

THE CHAIRPERSON

and teacher before, during and after each meeting.

The section describes the steps followed by the chairperson, secretary, and teacher. It includes objectives, information on group dynamics, decisions on meeting dates, and feedback on the course schedule. While the teacher encourages the chairperson to speak, the teacher also assigns to work with the chairperson and secretary. The following section describes the steps followed by the chairperson, secretary, and teacher before, during and after each meeting.
Meanwhile the teacher monitors the chairperson’s language in terms of the stated objectives; both positive features and errors are noted.

Post-Meeting

Immediately after the meeting the chairperson and teacher get together to review the chairperson’s language. Once again, the teacher asks the chairperson to assess his/her own performance by asking one or more of the following questions: “How did you feel about your use of English during the meeting?” “What was easy?” “What was difficult?” A discussion takes place and the teacher shares observations with the chairperson. This generally evolves into a conversation on how to work on these needs.

The secretary writes the first draft of the minutes and consults the teacher.

The Minutes Secretary

The target language while in the chairing role evolves into a conversation on further ways to work on these needs. The teacher shares observations with the chairperson. This generally evolves into a conversation on further ways to work on these needs.

Pre-Meeting

Prior to each student’s first time as minutes secretary, the student and teacher discuss various aspects of the role: objectivity, accuracy, and teacher discretion. The secretary receives a comprehensive self-access module containing guidelines and exercises for writing minutes in English. The teacher encourages the secretary to determine minutes from past meetings and use them as models for authentic minutes. The secretary and the teacher discuss various aspects of the role. Objectivity, accuracy, and teacher discretion are usually considered. They look at samples of minutes written by other students.

During the Meeting

The secretary takes notes during the proceedings, using a form to organize the details (see Appendix 3). This can be a demanding role for a language learner, even at the advanced level. The secretary must be able to grasp the main points of a discussion, take reliable notes and deal with a variety of accents and speaking styles. This is not an easy task, but it is a crucial one for any meeting to be useful. The minutes secretary plays a key role in preparing the minutes for the next meeting.
The students gain an important sense of com-
munication and teamwork. They can focus on their second language in a supportive environment.

The students soon perceive that this meeting is not unlike their usual

CONCLUSION

As in any authentic meeting in the workplace, the chairperson and

THE AUTHOR

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students. She is currently working with the Advanced Language Training Pro-

gram of the Public Service Commission in Ottawa. She has a particular interest

in work-related oral interaction courses.

The chairperson's organizational skills, tact and appropriate level of lan-
guage are crucial for the smooth functioning of the proceedings.

Students have already grown aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The

teacher, whose aim is to guide the secretary to self-edit as much as

possible, encourages the learner to focus on both good feu-

tures and problem areas in the final version of the minutes.

Together they decide on

the final version of the minutes. This version is typed, dis-
APPENDIX 1

Sample of Student-Written Minutes

ADVANCED LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM
MINUTES OF REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETING

Date and Time: Friday, September _, 19_ - 1:30 p.m.
Place: Room K-125
Secretary: Andre R.
Chairperson: Marie-Therese
Also Present: Marie-Therese's inquiry at the last meeting about student access

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:
The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. THE PAPAL VISIT:
Jean-Pierre pointed out that it would be very difficult to come to the school on September 19th and 20th. During the Papal Visit most of the bridges and streets in downtown Hull and Ottawa would be closed. Therefore, Jean-Pierre suggested modifying the daily class schedule. The matter was discussed and the teachers agreed to adapt the daily schedule to the circumstances.

3. CORRECTION:
Jean-Guy suggested that the students correct each other when speaking. He also asked the teachers to provide more correction in class. Following an interesting exchange among all present, it was decided that the teachers and the students correct each other when speaking. He suggested that the students correct each other when speaking.

4. USE OF THE WORD PROCESSOR:
Further to Marie-Therese's inquiry at the last meeting about student access to the word processor, Teresa informed the group that it would be available to interested students daily after 4 p.m. The Administration is looking into the possibility of a short training session in the use of the word processor. The matter was discussed and the teachers agreed to adapt the daily schedule to the circumstances.

5. PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION COURSES (POC):
Elizabeth mentioned that a photocopy of the Management "REAL SIMULATION" 239
Centre course calendar was available in the Resource Centre. She pointed out that on November 1 and 2, 19__, a course on "Work Distribution and Simplification" was available, and that on December 3, 4, 5, 19__, the Centre is offering a course on "Leadership and Management: A Program for Women".

She added that the P.O.C. was a regular activity within the Academic Phase and encouraged students to register in a course given in English as soon as possible.

6. ADJOURNMENT:
The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

7. NEXT MEETING:
The next meeting will be held on September 21st. Jean-Pierre will be the Secretary and Jean-Guy will act as chairperson.

C.C.: Participants

Andre_R.

Secretary

Admission

and encouraging students to register in a course given in English as soon as

Program: A Program for Women."

Centre course calendar was available in the Resource Centre. She pointed out
APPENDIX 2
ADVANCED LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAM
REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETING

Name:

Date of Meeting: Jan. 31, 1986

Jean-Clude

While chairing the Review and Planning Meeting I plan to focus on the following:

1. Pronounce my first commands correctly.
2. Use the present perfect and past tense
3. "Shutting the door" on this item.
4. Does anyone have any further comments?
5. Let's begin by approving the minutes of the last meeting.
6. Use the following expressions as required:
7. Use language that is businesslike but polite.

My Objectives:

Follow-up:

I hope the Review and Planning Meeting plan to focus on the

Date of Meeting: Jan. 31, 1986

Jean-Clude
## NOTES FOR THE MINUTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Proposed by</th>
<th>Points Made in Discussion (Identify Speaker)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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Review and Planning Meeting, ALTP
Date: __________________________