

Robin Skipsey interview summary

SM: How long have you been involved in teacher education?

[5:16] since 2013. Worked on a schools' project in the east of Tokyo with the British Council for the first 6 years. As a result, I started teacher training for schools' teachers and joined the English for Educations system department. And shortly after, started talking to the Ministry of Education to recruit teacher trainers.

[6:41] so our training is based on the classroom practice we tried out in actual public schools in Tokyo. We are in the 4th year of the project now. The project has a good reputation in Japan as it is practical and is what the teachers can do with their students.

SM: tell me about the team you are working with?

[7:30] we have 4 teacher trainers. I manage those trainers. We have a senior project manager who oversees the logistics and finances of the project and 3 project officers who report to her. And they are all full-time.

SM: asked specifically about (xxx) project if video is involved in it.

[8:16] we use video in this project in two ways. Because the focus of the project is to bring change in classrooms, teachers who attend the program are asked to record their lessons before attending the program (before step 1). After the first face-to-face training which is step 1, we work with them online and help them to prepare a second lesson to be videoed (Step 2) and bring back to the second face-to-face session which is step 3. With this second video, they work in groups of four. They show their videos to their colleagues and highlight the changes they have made on their teaching after the first training.

1 RS: theres a couple of ways we use video in the
2 project. the first is that because we wanted to
3 focus the outcomes of the project on change in
4 the classroom we ask all of the teachers who
5 attend our programme to video a lesson of theirs
6 before they attend the programme. so in that kind
7 of pdf i sent you thats before step one. and then
8 after step one after the kind of face to face
9 training we work with them online. we mentor them
10 online and help them to prepare a video a plan
11 for a second lesson which they also video and
12 they bring back to the second stage of face to
13 face training which is step three. and in the
14 step. when they come back with their second
15 lesson video they work in groups of four. and
16 they show their videos to their colleagues and
17 they highlight parts of the video which show what
18 kind of ideas from the training theyve tried out.
19 and they highlight the things that theyve learnt
20 since their first video. so it gives them a kind
21 of portfolio of what the training has changed
22 about their teaching.

SM: so, step 1 is learn methods?

[9:55] Yes, that's 5 days face-to-face training.

23 SM: so can that. so looking at the leep project that
24 ive got step one is learn methods.
25 RS: yes so thats basically five days face to face
26 training.
27 SM: and before they do that theyve got to video
28 record their own lesson.
29 RS: thats right.

SM: and before that they record their lesson. What sort of instructions do you give them for recording their lessons?

[10:15] we ask them to put the camera where it can capture everything in the classroom. In the first year, because it was an unusual request it was a bit problematic. But now it is a lot smoother.

30 SM: and what sort of prompts or instructions do you
31 give them for that task of recording their
32 lesson.
33 RS: recording the lesson we ask them to record a
34 lesson so that the camera is set up in a way so
35 that we can see what the students are doing and
36 what the teachers doing and whats on the board.
37 SM: and is that usually fairly unproblematic for the
38 teachers. is that is your experience. what do
39 teachers say about that.
40 RS: well in the first year it was an unusual request
41 so it was a little bit problematic. but once
42 since the project has been established and the
43 boards of education officials know whats going on
44 that process now is a lot smoother.

SM: They record themselves. Do you ask them to do anything with the video?

[11:26] they pass the video on to us. at the end of week 1 training we give general comments on the contexts of the videos picking out some points from the videos that we want to share with other groups and comment on some areas we like them to work on while producing their second video.

55 SM: so they record themselves and do you ask them to
56 do anything with that video in.
57 RS: we ask them. no so they pass the video onto us.
58 SM: right.
59 RS: at the end of the week one training we give some
60 general comments about the contents of the
61 videos. so we pick out some points from the
62 videos that we want to share with other teachers
63 that are examples of good practice. then we share
64 with them some areas that wed like them to work
65 on in step two when theyre producing their second
66 video.

SM: So, the feedback is to the whole group using some sort of examples?

[12:04] we don't show examples from the videos as it will be face threatening and embarrassing. We simply pick out and describe the things we saw.

67 SM: so the feedback is to the whole group.
68 RS: the whole group.
69 SM: youre using sort of examples.
70 RS: yes and we dont actually show examples of the
71 video because it would be face threatening and
72 embarrassing if we kind of showed videos to the
73 whole group. we simply pick out and describe
74 things that we saw.
75 SM: right okay. but when you do that are you creating
76 a video yourselves to feedback to the group.
77 RS: no.
78 SM: no.
79 RS: no no. we do it face to face without it.
80 SM: okay so thats in. yes.
81 RS: obviously each week the videos that we see will
82 show different aspects different issues.
83 SM: okay. so the video is recorded by the teacher.
84 that informs the kinds of feedback you give to
85 them as a group. but they dont you dont show
86 those videos back to them.
87 RS: no thats right.

SM: do you give individual feedbacks to the teachers?

[13:03] No, we would like to but we don't have the time to do that. That's why in step 3 we ask them to share their videos with colleagues.

88 SM: do you give the teachers any individual feedback
89 on something that youve seen in their video.
90 RS: no we dont no. we would like to but the. we would
91 like to and i think that would actually be very
92 valuable for them. the issue we have is just
93 staff resources in that we dont have the time to
94 do that. but no we dont have the time to do that.
95 and thats why in step three we ask them to share
96 their videos with colleagues. but we dont do it
97 in step one because they dont have a common
98 framework to (xxxx).
99 SM: no. no i think that makes sense. yes that so when
100 you get to the second training session then
101 theyre sharing their video their second video
102 with their cohort or you know people that are
103 doing the course not colleagues who are not doing
104 the course back in the school. but people who are
105 doing this training.
106 RS: exactly yes.

SM: Can you tell me what they talk about after they share their videos?

[14:05] we focus on clear instructions and practice activities like group or pair work where there is for example an information gap activity. That what they discuss about commenting on the activities, on the quality of interactions between students, priority of instructions and the engagement of students.

107 SM: so can you tell me a little bit about that and
108 how what sort of things that they talk about and
109 notice about the videos or become objects of
110 discussion.
111 RS: (xxxx). sure the kind of things that we focus on
112 in the course are clear instructions and practice
113 activities that are focused and group work. for
114 example pair work where theres an information
115 gathering activity and things like that. thats
116 what they discuss in step three when theyre
117 looking at each others videos. they comment on
118 the activity the quality of the interactions
119 between the students and the clarity of the
120 instructions and the engagement of the students.
121 SM: great. so do those i mean you were talking about
122 establishing a framework so presumably in the
123 five days those are the kind of things youre
124 talking about about teaching talking time.
125 RS: yes.
126 SM: clear instructions practice those kinds of
127 things.
128 RS: yes.

SM: do teachers come up with different areas of discussion than the ones you pointed out?

[15:19] yes, they do for example if teachers spot somethings like students not paying attention to the teacher in a group discussion, and if they relate that with their own classroom, those areas will be discussed.

SM Do you think there is some sort of evidence they carry on videoing themselves?

[15:22] we've got anecdote for evidence because we are in touch with these teachers online. When they do the cascading, it's not a requirement to use videos but some teachers ask similar video recording of lessons to come and share what they do in their c.rooms during the cascade training.

SM: So, when they do that, they don't use examples from videos again?

[17:24] we went to observe a cascade training in Kyushu. They had a training before we went and the instruction was to try out activities in their class, video it and bring it for the next session so they were discussing in pairs on their videos. It was quite interesting because I had a pre-conceived idea that everyone has very big classes but there was one teacher who only had one student.

SM: what is the second way you use videos in this project?

[18:42] as part of the project in year 1 and 2, (xxx) asked us to film an educational DVD which was produced and distributed to all schools in Japan. For the second year we worked with number of teachers from the first year of the project. We went to their schools, videoed their

lessons, interviewed them and their students. Then we produced the video picking out key points from their lessons. Those videos were distributed in all schools in Japan but we also integrated them in our project. From year 3 of the project to now year 4, teachers are given discussion tasks based on the videos.

[20:34] we 've got brilliant evaluation from a different part of Kyushu where the board of education sent out a set of instructions and got all their senior high school teachers to watch the videos as a group to discuss, make an action plan and send a report back to the board of education. Then a supervisor from the board of education observed teachers teaching and said what the board has been asking teachers to do for years with no effect have are now done as a result of watching the DVD.

SM: can you give me examples of what the board has asked the teachers to do but haven't been done?

[21:45] yes, integrating speaking and pair work activities into lessons. The project had made things a bit more tangible and concrete.

[23:43-24:37] what is really good about the project is that it uses a realistic model for what the teachers can do in their classroom with their students. One is the teacher leading the training around the country are Japanese and Two- they have got these videos which shows exactly what Japanese teachers do. It is also motivating- teachers say if that teacher did it I can do it too. It is also developmental to us. teachers reported how much they benefited out of the process.

134 RS: absolutely and thats the other thing thats really
135 good about it is that is that again the kind of
136 feedback that i think inevitably happens with
137 this kind of british council project that we had
138 in year one was its all very well for you to
139 demonstrate this kind of thing. but you know
140 japan is different and that kind of thing. and
141 when were hearing that. well were not hearing
142 that at all any more actually. and i think the
143 two things. one is having the cascade model where
144 the teachers who are leading the training around
145 the country are japanese. and two is that theyve
146 got this video which shows japanese teachers
147 doing exactly what theyre kind of modelling. so
148 yes its very much more as you say its more
149 concrete and also more its a realistic model of
150 what teachers can do in their classroom with
151 students. and its more motivating i think
152 actually. theyre more like well if you know if
153 that person can do it i can do it too.

SM: How long do you think this project will last?

[27:58] we now have up 30,000 teachers. The aim is to reach all secondary level English teachers in Japan by the end of 5 years, we are on the 4th year now.

SM: So, there is an online community of practice. Do the trainers have any links to other video materials?

ViLTE Resource

[29:08] yes, we link 'LearnEnglish Teens' materials for speaking and listening videos. The other day one of the teachers asked for advice a lead into a reading lesson and I sent her a link to 'a LearnEnglish Teens on that topic. She used it and students found it motivating.

[33:01] for the cascading we give materials. In step 3 we get them to prepare and practice delivering the training. So, it's a very controlled cascading. There is a positive feedback on the cascade trainings. During cascading, the teachers do not go through similar process like the trainers (step 1, 2 ...)

[35:26] no article written so far