

**SPICE - Train The Trainers programme 18- 22nd August 2014, Mannar – 25-29th August 2014 Batticaloa.**

**SPICE programme working in association with the British Council.**

**The team:**

Principal trainer Daniel Graves from The British Council – DELTA & CELTA.

Mohan Samarasinhe – Founder, chairman and programme & classroom co-coordinator

Victoria Godsall – teaching assistant provided by Spice – CELTA & DTLLS.

This wonderful work could not have happened without the help support and guidance of the following people:

General logistics and coordination of setting up the course: Tharunyata Hetak & Savithri Panditharatne, The British Council & Lesley Dick,

Mannar: Rajan Croos (Director, Trilingual Association of Mannar)

Batticaloa: Mrs Charles (GA Batticaloa) and Ali and Tanuja Moulana

I am honoured to have been a part of the good work provided by the SPICE charity. We have just completed two intensive 'training the trainers' programmes in Mannar and Batticaloa.

Daniel Graves was responsible for the main course delivery and for the training over the two weeks. My role was to support him wherever needed and to observe, monitor and give feedback. At the beginning of the course, some of the students were shy at speaking out loud and therefore this role was helpful to help relax the students, especially the more introverted females.

A very important stipulation of the intensive residential course was to enforce the speaking of the English language at ALL times, even during breaks and evenings. Any breach of this would lead to points being taken off their team and a severe ticking off by the Chairman!

It was clear, from the beginning, that both the teachers from Mannar and Batticaloa were experienced teachers. This course has been imperative to them helping develop their techniques as English teachers and how to fulfill their role as passing on the love of the language they are teaching.

The main course that was delivered was professional, educational and meticulously well-planned. Its focus was on encouraging and improving spoken English within the classroom and also the listening of English. It was based on real classes that have been videoed by the British Council. The DVD course features local Sri Lankan teachers and is designed to get the participants to reflect on what was good, what could be done better and why the teacher made the choices she did.

As a CELTA teacher, I recognized the techniques but was immensely impressed with the incredible skills of Daniel Graves, who managed to grade the language & the delivery of the courses to the different needs of the trainers we were teaching. The course was long and intense – 9 hours x 5 days. Despite this, Daniel managed to keep the students engaged and entertained by adding humour, diversifying the groups, keeping a scoreboard of good performance (encouraging a competitive spirit), but most of all, by being human, fun and inclusive of everybody in the room.

There was a workbook provided for each student which will act as a point of reference for the teachers in the future. It's worth adding that Daniel's commitment to the environment was practised, and there were no unnecessary handouts or worksheets.

Students worked through the workbook with the days focusing on working towards a more communicative classroom in general, integrating language and skills, integrating listening and speaking skills, controlled speaking activities, and finally, on the last day, free speaking activities.

The days were generally structured by starting with playing relative games and activities that served as a model for students. They were also good 'starters/warmers' for the day ahead. Examples of these were games involving lexical sets (doing a dance if word repeated), miming, crumpled sentences, Chinese whispers, yes/no/maybe debating game, word maps and fun that can be had with these, pyramid discussions, scaffolding, and tons more of Daniel's own teaching games and techniques. These fun activities were followed by an activity that would become a presentation by the group.

Then the prediction on the video the students would be watching – highlighting to the students the need for some new techniques. We would then watch the videos and analyse them in great detail, first in pairs, then as a class and finally, each student would get the opportunity to work in their groups and actively model 'a good lesson' micro-teaching incorporating all their new learning – such as ICQs (instruction checking), CCQs (concept checking questions), monitoring, drilling, presenting vocabulary and a big focus on 'making the topic interesting to the student', 'including the student' and more STT (student talking time) and less TTT (teacher talking time). Throughout all of this Daniel reminded the students the importance of writing good notes – teams being awarded point for exceptional note taking.

Between 4 and 6 O'clock, the main part of the teaching day was over and the students had the opportunity of discovering the fun and relaxed informal English learning opportunities that can take place in free speaking activities by staging a play or skit. In this instance a 'Bollywood skit'. The week culminated in some memorable and dramatic performances by both sets of students. Interestingly, the students in Mannar had a different approach and their skits were generally humorous and dramatic. There was singing, dancing, affairs, an exorcism, a polygamist, and a thieving statue.

The Batticaloa students, on the other hand, delivered more somber performances highlighting the problems of prostitution, alcoholism, pressure on students and immigration.

Both very different, and in relation to the groups' personality as a whole, but equally as entertaining and thought provoking and great fun to watch.

All in all, the programmes in Mannar and Batticaloa were great successes. The students in Mannar had a far more enthusiastic and extrovert dynamic. In contrast to the Batticaloa students who appeared to be more educated and perhaps a little reluctant to participate at first. However, there was no doubt that by the end of the course, both groups felt that they had learnt a huge amount and there was an excited feeling exuded by the teachers that they were really looking forward to getting back into the classrooms and experimenting with these great techniques to encourage active conversation and listening. The success is mainly due to the wonderful trainer Daniel Graves. Daniel really worked so hard and with such energy – right from the beginning, through to the end. I have seen a lot of EFL teachers but I've never seen anybody quite as engaging and intuitive as Daniel – he constantly assesses the students and their needs and adapts to their level of interest. The first programme in Mannar had a different type of student to the Batticaloa programme and, with this in mind, he managed to change the delivery of the course to adapt to their needs. He delivered two hugely successful courses and has therefore, changed the lives of 30 Jaffnans with Batticaloarians and Mannars with Mannarians and, in turn, all the children they will teach.

The coupling of the British Council with SPICE makes this intensive course hugely educational, rewarding and life changing to its participants – bringing modern teaching methods to the people who need them most in order to change their economy and lives.

Finally, none of this would happen without the good and tireless work of Mohan Samarasinha.

Mohan is genuinely passionate about the people of Sri Lanka and the need for good English language education to take place, focusing especially on the need in rural areas of Sri Lanka helping the children towards a better life. Just as having good infrastructure on the roads in Sri Lanka is imperative to the countries' success, Mohan believes that English as a global language is vital to the future of Sri Lanka's children and he works tirelessly and selflessly to provide courses to do just that. I have total faith that in just a

few years time, Mohan will see the rewards of his efforts. In the meantime, we should support Mohan and all the wonderful work he does to change people's futures.