



## Creative Approaches to Online Teaching

Jean Wood

**As we begin to exit the pandemic and reflect on the monumental impacts it has had on teaching and learning, there is an opportunity to reflect.**

It may well be that elements of online learning may remain important parts of teaching into the future as 'the students of today and tomorrow have moved beyond the face-to-face experience' (Morreale et al., 2021 p.118). In a recent whole-day session (March 1st, 2021) BGU PGCE secondary trainees attended a conference on Creative Approaches to Online Learning. This highlighted the many aspects of technology being used in schools and about which trainees wanted to find out more. BGU alumni and teachers from our partner schools demonstrated how they use the Microsoft and Google suites in their schools and individual trainees shared their expertise in a wide range of apps, including Spiral, Mentimeter, Nearpod, Sway, Mural, TeacherMade, Flipgrid, Quizlet, and Jamboard. Some sessions gave advice about reducing file sizes, using immersive reader for subtitles and how to use a smart phone as a visualiser.

The current situation has encouraged teachers to consider how to transfer important elements of face-to-face teaching to an online platform. Active learning has been suggested to be more successful at engaging students than traditional lectures delivered online (Venton and Pompano, 2021), and central to a consideration of these various approaches at the conference was to harvest the trainees' experiences as online learners (Yen and Nhi, 2021), and to consider what Morreale et al. (2021) term 'immediacy', and Richardson et al., 2015, term 'instructor presence', or ways to preserve teacher/pupil in-the-moment interactions in the virtual classroom.

Of equal interest, though, was the ways that many elements of on-line teaching may have potential to continue as useful into physical learning spaces. For example, in the session on Class Notebook, Jenny Rees from Skegness Academy, demonstrated how to set up a digital notebook for her class, and how this has improved the engagement of her pupils. She can upload the work all in one place, including videos and



listening material and attractive worksheets. She can mark their work and leave audio feedback for whole classes or individuals. Jenny will continue to use this method when she is back in the classroom, for homework and for pupils who are absent. In schools where pupils have their own devices exercise books have become a thing of the past.

It was a fascinating day that asked as many questions as were answered. It challenged us all to consider our relationship with technology, and how to nurture that relationship as our teaching environment begins to return to 'normal'.

### References

- Morreale, S. P., Thorpe, J., & Westwick, J. N. (2021). Online teaching: challenge or opportunity for communication education scholars? *Communication Education*, 70(1), 117-119.
- Richardson, J. C., Koehler, A. A., Besser, E. D., Caskurlu, S., Lim, J., & Mueller, C. M. (2015). Conceptualizing and investigating instructor presence in online learning environments. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 16(3).
- Yen, T. V. M., & Nhi, N. T. U. (2021). The Practice of Online English Teaching and Learning with Microsoft Teams: From Students' View. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, 12(2), 51-57.
- Venton, B. J., & Pompano, R. R. (2021). Strategies for enhancing remote student engagement through active learning.

# Constructing 'good teaching' through written lesson observation feedback

Jenny Wynn

The observed lesson ends. The pupils leave. The school and university-based mentors gather. The beginning teacher breathes. Wipes the board clean. Switches off the projector. Sits. Braces. Discusses. The content, purpose and dimensions of the ensuing conversation between beginning teacher and mentors have received significant research attention. Following this post-lesson discussion, the mentors normally give written feedback. Formal. Black and White. Lasting. Yet we know little about this written feedback which has largely been ignored in favour of verbal post-lesson discussions.

Our recently published paper discusses the following question: how is 'good teaching' discursively constructed through the written lesson observation feedback given to beginning teachers? By asking how teaching is constructed we are particularly interested in the topics that are highlighted in the feedback, the kinds of claims that are made and the epistemological dimensions of these claims, including the evidence that is offered in support. Written lesson observation feedback constructs teaching in particular ways that have most immediate impact on the beginning teacher receiving the feedback, and the school-based mentor with whom the feedback is co-constructed. In the medium and longer-term these texts are a part of the rituals and praxis making up school and professional cultures.

It is easy to say ITE programmes ought to involve deep, mutually enriching links between 'research and practice'. However, the written lesson observation feedback we have analysed suggests that, in line with findings from the small number of previous studies, there is significant scope to improve the dialogues between research evidence and practice through this particular activity. Written lesson observation is a potentially powerful opportunity for ITE partnerships to demonstrate the kinds of rich integration between theory and practice they expect of beginning teachers. It offers a concrete opportunity for ITE partnerships to model what they mean by applying research to practice. The wider context of ongoing debate about university-school relationships and research engagement in teaching more broadly, and particularly within ITE, add to the importance of this work to critically explore written lesson observation feedback.

Puttick, S. & Wynn, J. (2020). Constructing 'good teaching' through written lesson observation feedback. *Oxford Review of Education*, 46 (6). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03054985.2020.1846289>

Winch, C., Oancea, A., & Orchard, J. (2015). The contribution of educational research to teachers' professional learning: philosophical understandings. *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1017406>

## Covid Cento Poems

Various Authors

During 'first lockdown' Nina Alonso of Poetry by Heart invited her female friends from around the world to learn a poem and to video themselves reciting it. She compiled clips from these into a new 'video-poem' (available at [https://youtu.be/u8czUH\\_PGUE](https://youtu.be/u8czUH_PGUE)) that made an original response to the Covid crisis.

### Poem 1: Vacant Cup

I sat as the water fell against my ankles built itself up around me<sup>4</sup>  
For oft, when on my couch I lie,<sup>2</sup>  
Looking northward looking southward<sup>6</sup>  
In vacant or in pensive mood –<sup>2</sup>

Nobody else was out...<sup>3</sup>

Flashed news in hand<sup>1</sup>  
I'm trying to be truthful.<sup>5</sup>  
Of meaning it dazes to understand,<sup>1</sup>  
Not a cute card or a kissogram –<sup>5</sup>

We try to talk but have to shout:<sup>3</sup>

"I can love you!"<sup>7</sup>

Filling my coffee cup before floating it away from the table –<sup>4</sup>  
Looking to the goal looking back without control<sup>6</sup>

But only from a distance.<sup>7</sup>

1. 'A Wife in London' by Thomas Hardy
2. 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' by William Wordsworth
3. 'Sand-between-the-toes' by A. A. Milne
4. 'It Was the Animals' by Natalie Diaz
5. 'Valentine' by Carol Ann Duffy
6. 'Reflection' by Christina Rossetti
7. 'From Distance' by R. H. Sin

## Covid Cento Poems (*continued*)

Inspired by this, our current cohort of PGCE Secondary English teachers wove their own Cento poems, using one or two lines that they felt spoke for them about their experience this year, borrowed from other literature. These fragments combine to form new poems, entirely composed of writings by other authors. The Cento poetic form has impressive credentials; in the ancient world Hosidius Geta's poetic tragedy *Medea* is a Cento entirely constructed using lines and half lines by Virgil, and a more modern example is Peter Gizzi's *Ode: Salute to the New York School*.

We hope you enjoy our Covid Lockdown Cento poems!

### Poem 3: Weighed Down

I'm under the rubble and have stopped screaming,<sup>3</sup>  
And right now, they're building a coffin my size<sup>4</sup>  
for sad old earth must borrow its mirth,<sup>6</sup>  
Mama, we're all gonna die<sup>4</sup>

Water water everywhere nor any drop to drink<sup>5</sup>  
Some days I can almost hear sirens in the distance<sup>3</sup>  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed  
through sludge,<sup>1</sup>  
Mama, we're meant for the flies<sup>4</sup>

Been so used to having something<sup>3</sup>  
For ghosts can visit when they choose<sup>2</sup>  
I have to believe someone will save me eventually<sup>3</sup>  
Weep and you weep alone<sup>6</sup>

Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,<sup>1</sup>  
My voice has forgotten how to ask for help<sup>3</sup>  
Whereas we humans can't refuse<sup>2</sup>  
Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,<sup>1</sup>

On top of me at all times<sup>3</sup>  
Towards our distant rest began to trudge<sup>1</sup>  
To grant the interview<sup>2</sup>

How do you become something that<sup>3</sup>  
has trouble enough of its own<sup>6</sup>  
Grows between the cracks?<sup>3</sup>

I believe I am still recovering<sup>3</sup>  
Laugh and the world laughs with you<sup>6</sup>  
Mama, we're all gonna<sup>4</sup>

Sources:

1. Dulce – Wilfred Owen
2. Phantasmagoria – Lewis Carroll
3. Buried – Zane Frederick
4. Mama – Gerard Way
5. Rime of the ancient mariner – Samuel Taylor Coleridge
6. Solitude – Ella Wilcox

### Poem 2: Next Slide Please

Shake my future push me past my complacency,<sup>1</sup>  
My taken - for - granted, my comfort zone -  
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.<sup>2</sup>  
The woman is perfected.  
Her dead  
Body wears the smile of accomplishment.<sup>3</sup>  
Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand<sup>4</sup>  
Tis not too late to seek a newer world.<sup>5</sup>  
The universe did not  
Breathe star fire into your bones<sup>6</sup>  
As though to breathe were life<sup>5</sup>  
Just so you could burn yourself out.<sup>6</sup>  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,<sup>5</sup>  
Summer's lease hath all too short a date<sup>7</sup>  
Wait and watch until  
The fattening dots burst into  
Nimble  
Swimming tadpoles.<sup>8</sup>

1. 'Shake My Future' - Dorothea Smartt
2. 'Democracy' – Langston Hughes
3. Edge' – Sylvia Plath
4. 'Remember' – Christina Rossetti
5. 'Ulysses' – Lord Alfred Tennyson
6. 'Meanwhile' – Nikita Gill
7. 'Sonnet 18' – William Shakespeare
8. 'Death of a Naturalist' – Seamus Heaney

### Poem 4: Far Down the Mountainside

Today you see far down a mountainside<sup>1</sup>  
May that breath rest you<sup>2</sup>  
The ship goes down and everybody is lost, or is  
living comfortably<sup>3</sup>  
Out over islands to a sure horizon<sup>1</sup>  
What does it matter where people go?<sup>4</sup>  
(Your) taken for granted comfort zone<sup>5</sup>  
(You) find (your)self at the edge<sup>3</sup>  
Where (are you) going? (You) don't know<sup>4</sup>  
It's useful to have other people<sup>6</sup>  
People will always need people<sup>6</sup>  
A caged bird stands on the grave of dreams<sup>7</sup>  
To love and to miss<sup>6</sup>  
As it has until now, and now, and now<sup>2</sup>  
Absence and heat everywhere<sup>3</sup>  
To hug and to kiss<sup>6</sup>  
Shake (your) future, push (you) past your  
complacency<sup>5</sup>  
And may each breath rest you.<sup>2</sup>

Sources:

1. Journey by Christine de Luca
2. A Solstice Blessing by Paidraig O Tuama
3. Peaches by Jack Gilbert
4. Spring Morning by A A Milne
5. Shake My Future by Dorothea Smart
6. People Will Always Need People by Benjamin Zephaniah
7. Caged Bird by Maya Angelou

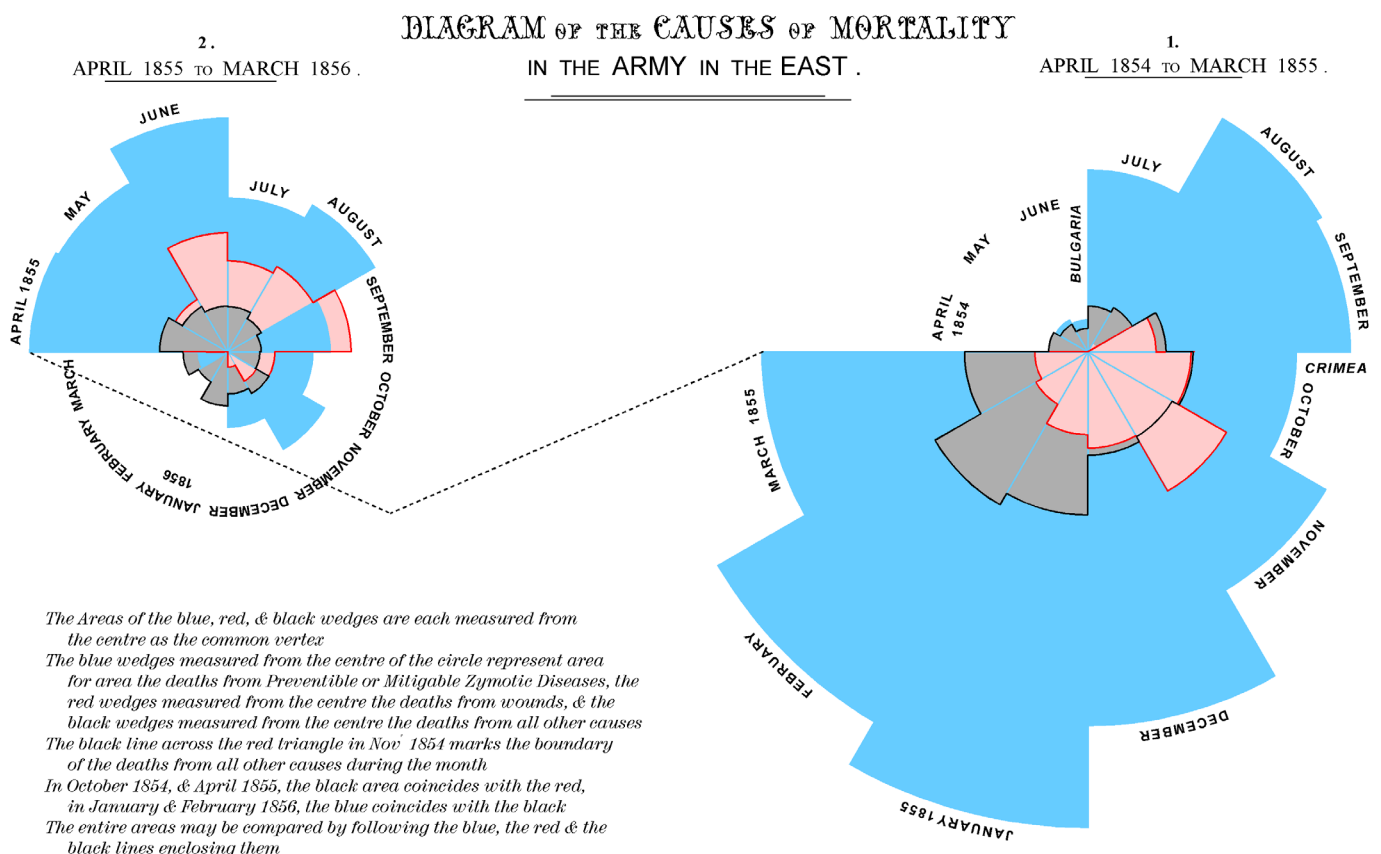
We have all become used to the statistics released to us daily regarding Covid-19. We compare cases per 100,00 across regions and countries, hospital admissions, numbers of first and second vaccines issued. We are alert to the fact that statistics may be misleading. I particularly liked the tongue in cheek analogy regarding the correlation between vaccine and blood clots on the BBC's More or Less this week: most people who have car accidents are wearing shoes; therefore, we should ban the wearing of shoes in vehicles.

Perhaps we think of this use of statistics to understand illness across a population as a modern phenomenon, but we would be wrong to do so. Florence Nightingale, probably best known for her development of modern nursing during the Crimean War and afterwards, is less well known for her pioneering work in statistics.

Although Nightingale and her team of 38 volunteer nurses arrived in October 1854, it was not until the hospitals had reached a critical state in March 1855, that they were allowed access, when they worked to improve diet, sanitation, morale, and general hygiene practices and death rates were reduced dramatically.

Importantly, Nightingale kept meticulous records of the death tolls in the hospitals as evidence of the importance of patient welfare and on returning to England she continued to press for better patient care. The Royal Commission on the Health of the Army was created, for which Nightingale prepared an 800-page report, advocating the use of statistics as a tool in decision making. Her books can be found online today. Nightingale used tables and created graphs, now called coxcombs, to highlight the death toll from diseases above the death toll from wounds in the Crimean War. One of her original graphs is shown in the following image.

<http://www.Florence-Nightingale-Avengeing-Angel.co.uk/Coxcomb.htm>



During the Crimean War, wounded British troops were shipped across the Black Sea to hospitals in Turkey, where death rates were very high. Nightingale believed that this was largely due to the poor conditions, which included poor nutrition and a general lack of hygiene. Diseases such as typhus, typhoid, cholera, and dysentery were rife in the army hospitals.

Measured from the centre, blue wedges represented deaths from preventable causes, the red are deaths from battle wounds and the black wedges are other causes. Whilst there has been discussion and criticism about the design of the graph, it was created by a woman grappling to find a solution to a deeply felt problem, and clearly shows that, even during periods of heavy fighting, such as in November



1854, far more soldiers died from infection than from wounds. By presenting her data visually, it has greater effect than a page of dry, statistics tables.

As part of my doctoral studies, I have been researching statistics education and one unexpected finding was the effect of their degree content on the confidence of the mathematics teacher to teach statistics, even 20 years later. As a result, I have examined the statistics content of BGU's own mathematics degree modules. Our third year BSc students have a unit on practice and pedagogy, and greater emphasis is given now to the applications and art of statistics. The Scottish poet, novelist and literary critic Andrew Lang famously quipped that politicians tend to use statistics 'as a drunken man uses lamp-posts—for support rather than illumination'. Here at BGU we hope to cultivate an attitude closer to that of Nightingale who used them to powerful effect to sway opinion in parliament, and who even made them beautiful.

For further information on Nightingale's work with statistics, see under:

Kopf, E. W. (1916). Florence Nightingale as statistician. *Quarterly publications of the American Statistical Association*, 15(116), 388-404.

McDonald, L. (2001). Florence Nightingale and the early origins of evidence-based nursing. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 4(3), 68-69.

Small, H. (1998, March). Florence Nightingale's statistical diagrams. In *Stats & Lamps Research Conference organised by the Florence Nightingale Museum at St. Thomas' Hospital, 18th March*.

The Guardian, "Florence Nightingale, Datajournalist: Information Has Always Been Beautiful" URL: <http://bit.ly/1waiJIC>

## Beyond Initial Teacher Education: Important messages for BGU NQTs

**We would like to inform you about the support we offer all our initial teacher trainees.** We have a dedicated staff that can be contacted to offer additional help or advice, including support with applications for work, especially if you are still looking for a permanent position. You can email us any time via [beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk)

We have a reading list service, including a specialist collection of NQT literature. All BGU Alumni are entitled to use the University Library for reference purposes, free-of-charge, so if you see something of interest, do pop in to the Teaching Resources Centre of the BGU library.

You can also talk to our library team about lifetime membership of the library, available for a fee of £50. ([library@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:library@bishopg.ac.uk))

Lastly, if any of you would be willing to contribute to our initial teacher education programme, we would welcome a return visit to BGU. So, please let us know if you are willing to share your experiences with both current and prospective trainees. We have already heard about some of your successes, and we would be delighted to hear even more. You can email [beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk) if you are interested or give us a call on **01522 527347**.



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