

need a bilingual worksheet for this text. You can see it in lesson one that they have to read a huge text which is more like a text for university. As an emergency measure, I would quickly make the translations available. Otherwise teachers are going to come back and say how we can deal with this text. The text is far too difficult for this level.

Lesson 2 is about daily activities. You could easily have a text about daily activities rather than these simple things listed here. The weekday mornings watching TV is one of the items. You can include some of the TV programs in the text. Then ask them to name two or three programs that they would like to watch something like that. I have looked at the student book closely. Again I would say the dialogues are too long. You should keep them very short.

The teachers would have to spend at least 20 minutes to deal with the complexities while the time available is only one session a week.

***These are very helpful observations. From the feedbacks received from teachers, apparently mastery of the English alphabet needs more work.***

You could have a separate alphabet. That's something that you could solve through self-study using an app or something. That should be easily available. That's where this parallel system that we are talking about in the document comes in. Teachers don't need to waste time on something that the students can easily do outside the classroom. When you have an app for it then you don't have to spend so much time in class. So a lot of those things that are not assigned to the classroom are assigned to the students to do outside the class.

### ***What about the structure of the units?***

My feeling is that they need more steps, more scaffolding. Here I see some questions. I would rather see first some examples of questions followed by a complete these questions activity to give a little bit more structure. This would then follow with an ask and answer the questions activity. With the way activities are organized, teachers are left to do quite a lot of work to get the students move through the unit. What you can do is to use supplementary support. If they find some lessons too difficult a couple of worksheets can do the job.

**So I think we want descriptors of what they can do at each level and that again I think would help with assessment and also with teaching**

***Many thanks again for sharing your views with us, as my last question I would like to ask you to let us know about your views on ELT community in Iran.***

Well I think because of the change in the linguistic landscape there is so much English out there. My impression is that many people see English as beneficial so the motivation seems to be high. I've got this from teachers that I talked to. I see this in the growth of the institutes which open up in every corner, and of course I see it in professional meetings with teachers who are so interested and willing to upgrade. I think there is a lot of professional interest which is good. I think things are moving quite quickly. With all these new opportunities available for the people to learn and even to improve their own professional qualifications as well it's a fairly dynamic state.

describe those competencies for example to know the distinction between a bridge and metro when I see the picture. When you show them a picture they can name the item.

***In CLT-based curriculums, classroom assessment is normally linked to standardized tests. Do you think we need to have standardized tests for comparison across schools?***

I suppose you do. But they will not be that different from classroom tests. We don't want the teachers to get bogged down in grammar-based activities. The main thing is that the tests should support the teaching and reflect the teaching rather than look totally different from what is done in the classroom.

***It would be of great help if you could share your observations about the newly developed textbooks with Roshd FLT readership.***

I've looked at year eight student book closely. The student book progress at the right level. But the workbook seems to be a bit problematic. I was a little bit puzzled about the disparity between the language in the student book and the language in the workbook. I noticed that in some units the grammar for past tense in the workbook was not in the student book. I wonder how teachers would deal with that. Here there is a text that reads I was born .... They have not had this structure before. It's just like language awareness that have not been presented before. There are quite complicated structures in the text. I don't know how the students would understand that.

For future workbooks I would recommend you to have parallel texts in Farsi. That's a huge piece of text for this level. We have texts of two sentences in the student book and here it is more like a jump to big texts. If teachers have trouble with that I would make available a parallel text on a website. I would make available bilingual versions of that and new words in English and Farsi. The workbook is supposed to be used for self-instruction at home. There is nobody at home to help the students. They might



about competency descriptions for years 1, 2, 3 and 4 but I would rather see efforts expended into building a supplementary set of resources that could be centrally based. Teachers can do loads of additional reading texts, audio and video files. These are the things that we have been talking about and we have tried to describe in the document we have developed today. So we have to recognize that there has been a paradigm shift and that classrooms are only the starting point. The textbook writers have done a very good job in updating the textbooks. That's nice but the future is not in textbooks not even on a textbook writer. If I meet a group of students in Iran who speak fluent English and say that they developed fluency using my books I know they did not get it from my books. That might have helped them a little bit but they did a lot of other things. I met a group of students today and they were BA students. They were very articulate. They could argue and present points of views and do all sorts of things. They didn't get that from my books and I asked them where they got that from and they were telling me all sorts of things they do. The students are doing it. So we need to acknowledge that they are doing it. We have to really see how we can make those resources available to students in secondary school level. That's for me where the future lies.

***With the current forward planning of the English curriculum, it might be important to specify the outcomes or standards for the whole program and for each grade level. Do you consider this an important aspect of language curriculum development?***

I think they do need to be described in terms of competencies, that is, how much vocabulary they know, what they can do

with what they know. I think we need an Iranian CEF. But at the lower levels they need to be more specific because the CEF descriptors are very general. So I think we really have to have the descriptors. Basically we should look at what is taught in the student book. What do they need to do when they are talking about the family? Can they name the family members? Can they ask two questions about someone's family? Can they write three short sentences about their family and so on. So I think we want descriptors of what they can do at each level and that again I think would help with assessment and also with teaching. I don't know how the assessment is handled but I would like to think about it. As I can see in book 8, we have here in the table of contents *My Abilities*. I think these need to be spelt out in competencies, I can do this, I can do that in functional terms which probably happens in the unit, lesson 2. It is here in lesson 2. You can say what you can do during the week. You can write the days of the week. I think it's very good.

**I suppose one of the messages that I had received was that many Iranian teacher educators are good at giving theory but not so good in developing practical applications**

It wouldn't do any harm. It could give more focus to competencies. The teachers' book should say very clearly these are the competencies that the students should master in this unit. They should have acquired, for example, the vocabulary of thirty new words, know how to pronounce them, and so on. So you

the mentor teachers are often not trained and are not given guidelines. It is a kind of hit or miss situation. You might end up with a teacher who is really interested in mentoring. You might also end up with somebody who is not interested. So it's important to know really what the issues are that we expect the students to focus on in practice teaching. That could be described in competency terms very easily. We can specify the competencies that student teachers should have mastered as a result of this practicum experience. We can then assess them in performance. I think that can be done quite easily. You pick up competencies like classroom management, clarity of instruction, degree of engagement, monitor students' language, and so on and so forth. So I think one would want to pull out, may be, five or six core areas with some competencies for each of them. Then the cooperating teachers would know what they should be working on. If it's all very global and open-ended it's hard to know what the focuses are. If the faculty says we want you to focus on some competencies in the area of classroom management, eliciting student production and the like, we can make a checklist of how well the trainees are in this one or that one. That will bring a more specific focus to the program in terms of what we want them to learn. Then of course you can develop training videos because lots of these things can be learned through observation. Let's take the topic in the competency area of eliciting or giving feedback for example and then we could have some videos. We can then ask trainees to watch the video clip and see what sort of things the teacher deals with. How does she deal with corrective feedback? What strategies do students adopt? That would give you

a sort of micro-skills to focus on in that particular domain. That would be one way to go about that sort of thing I think.

***Let's shift to the English language curriculum in high schools. You have had a meeting with the advisors in the English Department of the Curriculum Development Center. I am sure you are aware of the changes made in the curriculum over the last couple of years. Considering the limited time available for teaching English in high schools, What can realistically be achieved through the changes made in the approach and teaching materials?***

That's what we have been doing with colleagues here this afternoon. They've been saying that they've had these textbooks for a couple of years and they are a big improvement over the old ones. The textbooks are quite good but the future does not lie with the textbooks. We can have the best textbooks and the best teachers in the world but with 90 minutes or two hours a week you can't do very much. We have to acknowledge the fact that successful learners in Iran recognize that and do different sorts of things outside the class. They watch videos. They do different sort of things on the Internet and so on and so forth. We have to flip the classroom. Now a little bit of learning takes place in the classroom. The real locus for learning is beyond the classroom. So we have to develop, for example, a graded reading program, a whole range of resources that would target the levels, for example level 1, level 2 etc. that the students can make use of beyond the classroom. Then when they come to class the teacher can basically checks out what they have learned from those things. So we can spend a lot of time worrying



was some ideas about how understanding of curriculum development can be looked at from different perspectives depending on what you would focus on like input, process, or output. So we tried to put forward some ideas that might prompt people to reflect on and think about their own understanding of these topics and see whether it would be of use to them. People seemed to find it very interesting. But I have not seen the evaluations.

**I think we need an Iranian CEF. But at the lower levels they need to be more specific because the CEF descriptors are very general. So I think we really have to have the descriptors**

***In moving toward a competency-based teacher training curriculum, research seems to play an important role. Giving the fact that research and publication by teacher trainers is also an important component of the appraisal scheme for trainers' promotion, how can research be integrated with the curriculum so that research and instruction can feed each other?***

I think the research should come out of their own teaching and practice, that is, the kind of research which seems to be most useful. It could be action research or classroom research and so on. So it's a question of finding research topics that can help improve the delivery of the courses and that also can improve teaching practice I guess. Perhaps collaborative research will be important as well. When teacher researchers collaborate with classroom teachers they would be more likely to come up with information that

can be relevant to teachers rather than pursuing stuff to get articles published. One of the issues these days is so much emphasis on research for publication. Journal editors are getting flooded with articles from researchers in Iran and you can see often when a promotion exercise is coming up a lot of researchers try to come up with a kind of research just for the sake of doing it. They might decide to take a study done somewhere else for example and do a similar study in Iran. So I think this is part of the "publish or perish" problem rather than asking what would be useful in terms of this department or in terms of these communities, that is, the research that would have some impact. It is a fairly widespread problem. I guess it should be more problem-based research that looks to clarify issues and problems that occur in English teaching in Iran. People might be interested in doing all sorts of things that they are interested in the literature but I think in this day of changing needs and growing demand for English we should be looking for a more problem based type of research and practice.

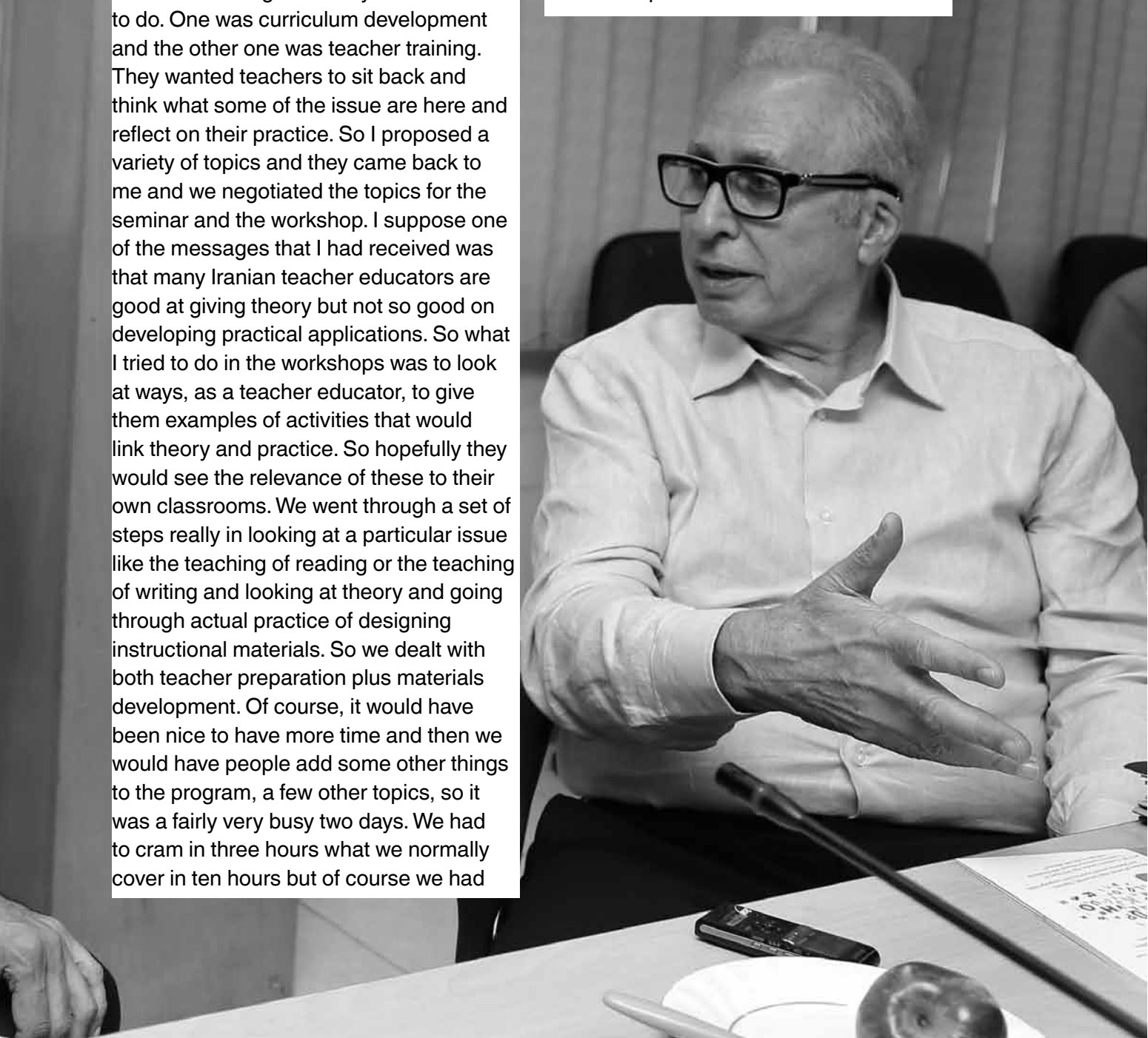
***Practicum seems to be an integral part of the teacher training curriculum. What do you think are the issues that need to be considered in planning practicum in a teacher training program?***

I think the practicum is the weakest part of these kinds of programs because the teachers are shuffled off to schools. Once, they get there you don't have much control over what is done. The cooperating teachers might have other interests. So one issue is the kind and extent of the cooperation between the schools where the students do the practice teaching and the main campus. The people who are

***First of all I would like to thank you for your kind agreement to have an interview with Roshd FLT on issues related to ELT in Iran. It would be of high interest to our readership to know about the aims of the four-day program you've had with Iranian educators. To what extent do you think the program has achieved its goals?***

The organizers from the teacher training university asked me if I could propose a teacher training seminar. There were two sorts of things that they wanted me to do. One was curriculum development and the other one was teacher training. They wanted teachers to sit back and think what some of the issue are here and reflect on their practice. So I proposed a variety of topics and they came back to me and we negotiated the topics for the seminar and the workshop. I suppose one of the messages that I had received was that many Iranian teacher educators are good at giving theory but not so good on developing practical applications. So what I tried to do in the workshops was to look at ways, as a teacher educator, to give them examples of activities that would link theory and practice. So hopefully they would see the relevance of these to their own classrooms. We went through a set of steps really in looking at a particular issue like the teaching of reading or the teaching of writing and looking at theory and going through actual practice of designing instructional materials. So we dealt with both teacher preparation plus materials development. Of course, it would have been nice to have more time and then we would have people add some other things to the program, a few other topics, so it was a fairly very busy two days. We had to cram in three hours what we normally cover in ten hours but of course we had

very experienced participants, most of them PhD holders, who normally do a lot of lecturing and training. They could move at that pace without any difficulties. Over the two-day conference sessions, there was again a bunch of topics that I addressed. Some of them had to do with what we understand by teacher learning. What are the components of teacher learning? What are the approaches to preparation of teachers both from the point of view of the institutions and from the point of view of self-development? What else we dealt with







Roshd  
& Teachers

# Issues in Teacher Training and Curriculum Development Interview With Professor Jack, C. Richards

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در

حاشیه سمینار و

کارگاه‌های آموزشی، که به همت دانشگاه فرهنگیان در روزهای سوم تا ششم آذرماه در تهران برگزار شد، با پروفیسور جک‌سی ریچاردز، به گفت‌وگو نشستیم. در این گفت‌وگو به موضوعاتی نظیر اهداف سمینار و کارگاه‌های آموزشی، نقش پژوهش و کارورزی در ارتقاء اثربخشی برنامه‌دستی تربیت‌معلم، جایگاه کتاب‌دستی در برنامه‌دستی زبان انگلیسی دوره متوسطه، و نقش تدوین توانش‌ها و سنجش عملکردی در آموزش زبان پرداخته‌ایم. مشروح موضوعات مطرح‌شده در ادامه به نظر خوانندگان محترم مجله می‌رسد.