

Post-Seminar 3 Assignment- Listening, Supporting and Challenging as Interpretive Practices

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What Happened? (Describe the Workshop)/Use of Prompts

I invited my teachers to join me for this workshop. 4 were able to attend, which was perfect. I had decided to use ALL the resources that were suggested as I feel they each provide a different aspect of this approach, and together would provide a more complete perspective.

I provided a bit of background about what I have been learning at MTEI, which most knew already because we have had a few sessions together this year where I have been practicing and doing my "MTEI Homework". We then read and discussed the quote about Good readers, and the Text/Havruta Partners triangle. We spent some time generating ideas on how we can 'hear' the text and give it a voice, and then reviewed that hand-out.(only 1 side).

Next, we had a great discussion about conversational patterns and norms, and I modeled some of that based on their responses, and also asked them to give examples. Then I segued to the handout on "Norms for Good Text Learning". Next, we read and discussed the hand out I created, which was based on the MTEI handout, that listed the prompts for good listening, supporting and challenging. By then, lots of time had passed!

I chose to have the teachers study the R. Shimi bar Ashi and R. Papa text. We divided into 2 pairings of havruta partners and I asked them to read and discuss the text keeping in mind everything we had just discussed. I went back and forth to each pair, listened, and asked some of my own supporting and challenging questions. Then we got back together as a group. I had prepared a written evaluation with 4 questions, but we were already running out of time. So we answered those questions verbally as a group, which allowed people to share their experiences and reflect on their learning. I ended by saying that this approach (of listening, supporting and challenging) is one I would like us to use together in our future meetings (individual and group) and that they can and should use with their students.

How did this compare to what I assumed or hoped would happen?

The lesson I had prepared took a lot longer than I expected. I was hoping that my teachers would have been able to switch partners, in order to have a second chance of practicing this method. I had also hoped I would be able to model this much more for my teachers, as was suggested. Neither of these things happened.

What *did* happen was that they actually used some of the prompts given, which definitely furthered and deepened the conversations; they asked one another questions that were supportive and gently challenging and did spend time scrutinizing the text and referring back to it over and over instead of just expressing 'their opinions'. One pair tried to use the Hebrew to further their discussion but in the end, they weren't sure of the true translation. This was a lot of what I was hoping for.

Were there aspects that surprised you?/pleased you?/ why?

I was tremendously pleased by how this process worked- how my teachers engaged with it, how open they were to trying this approach, and how well they worked together. I was so pleased to see them connecting to the content of the lesson I had presented. They LOVED the workshop and said it taught them a lot. Especially exciting for me was that I could see the learning process unfolding in front of me- I heard them using the language and applying the concepts which we had just discussed.

It pleased me greatly to hear them shifting their views and/or maintaining their stances by revisiting the text and through their conversations. I was not surprised that they did so well, as they are eager and bright and willingly volunteered to participate in this learning session, but I think I am a bit surprised on how quickly they caught on!

What did participants report about their experiences and/or learning?

Again, they all said it was a great experience. One teacher, who has studied in havruta often with family members, said this is the first time in a long time that she didn't get angry or emotional, due to the nature of this approach, and so for her, this was a much more enjoyable experience! Another expressed feeling initially intimidated as she was studying with the most knowledgeable member of the group, but in the process and the way her partner phrased questions and statements, that feeling quickly dissipated, and she began to feel more confident in her own abilities. This process helped empower her.

One pair expressed great pleasure in being able to stay with one another, remaining consistent and persistent, yet learning from each other, as they continued to examine the text, question one another and share their differing points of view.

One teacher just told me that even after just this one session, she has begun applying this method to other learning situations. She expressed that by focusing on what the TEXT is saying, she was able to repress or set aside her assumptions/feelings/biases, which she feels prevented her from twisting the author's words, which ultimately gave her a much richer and purer understanding of his essay. This was so exciting and touching for me to hear- that she credits this one session as changing her approach to learning in other arenas in life!

New insights/questions I have re: learning and /or teaching these practices

Teaching this approach reinforced for me the impact that using this supporting and challenging language can have on our learning/teaching practices, but also even in our daily lives, where I am also applying it. In practicing this method myself, and then teaching it, I am beginning to get more comfortable with it. I am also working really hard on attentive listening and not interrupting!!

When I taught this, we were able to pack a lot into the hour and half we had together, but we could have used more time. I think we might have cheated the process a bit by running out of time, and it would have been interesting for me to see what would have happened if my teachers had a second opportunity to practice this approach. I was also looking forward to modeling some of this, as I think that would have been instructive and actually fun for me, but I did not end up doing that.