

REVIEW

CBB TEACHER TRAINING PROJECT

SRI LANKA

The CBB Teacher Training Project is delivered by the British Council through the Sri Lankan government's Regional English Support Centres, and funded by the Council for Business with Britain.

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'I would like to thank those who gave me this opportunity to follow this course because it helps me to enhance my methods of teaching and I have learnt how to handle my lessons in a very effective way,' (a teacher in Anuradhapura). 'The course changed my attitudes towards teaching as a facilitator for students. Now I help my students to learn rather than [...] teach,' (a teacher in Hanguranketha).

Both quotes from questionnaire administered 2014

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Research Question

This evaluation of the CBB Teacher Training Project in Sri Lanka set as its objective research of the following hypothesis:

Trained teachers will display a more communicative classroom methodology than non-trained teachers, and this will be sustained by those who followed the programme three plus years ago.

In other words, it is classroom behavior of teachers, both observed and reflected upon, that is under investigation, rather than learner performance.

Background of CBB Teacher Training Project

Sri Lankan Context

The need to improve English language teaching and learning has been felt for many years in Sri Lanka. For example, in 2005 the then Prime Minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa, in his manifesto for the upcoming presidential election said that 'top priority' would be given to enhancing children's English language proficiency (Rajapaksa, 2005). In 2010 this document 'Mahinda Chintana', was expanded into a working plan by a department of the Ministry of Finance and Planning. Under a heading 'Policy Direction', the now President aims for all children to leave school with 'functional skills' in English and mathematics, and also urges that 'all teachers use their skills and knowledge to engage children and young people as partners in learning' (Dept. of Planning, 2010, p. 114). In other words, a more participatory approach is sought, leading to students being able to actually use English.

This use is what is valued, but found lacking, in the world of work. For example, a report published by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA) sees English as 'the most scarce primary skill' for new recruits at managerial and operational levels of recruits for the IT enabled services and business process outsourcing (ITES/BPO) sectors (MG Consultants, 2010, p. 33).

There are also significant differences in performance in English around the country, differences between different parts of the country, and between urban and rural areas. Taking English O Level results for 2011 as our measure, island-wide 269,318 candidates sat the exam, and 44.57 achieved an A, B, C or S ('Simple Pass') grade (Ministry of Education, 2012). This low pass rate is itself seen as a problem, but it is much more problematic in certain areas. In Colombo district 71.54 passed, but if we narrow down to Colombo zone (fundamentally, the city centre) the rate rises to 82.53. Similarly, and taking a city on the East coast, Batticaloa Central zone has a pass rate of 60.39, while Batticaloa (a zone which excludes the actual town) only has 35.34. Two districts, both under the Tamil Tigers until they were defeated by government forces in 2009 (Kilinochchi and Mullativu), have pass rates below 10%, but there are plenty of other areas unaffected by the war with poor results. The zones of Mahiyanganaya, Monaragela and Wellawaya, agricultural areas in the Eastern dry zone, all have pass rates in the low 20's. They really are a long way from Colombo. So, inequality is a further feature of English language performance in Sri Lanka. (See Appendix 1 for a provincial breakdown of pass rates for 2012 O Level.)

CBB Teacher Training Project History

The project has been running since 2006 (CBB also funded a series of teacher training workshops in 2005, out of which the current project grew). The ultimate goal is to upgrade the English language skills of pupils, to be achieved by '[building] the capacity of local English teachers to deliver more effective lessons by developing a cadre of teacher trainers who will act as mentors for teachers on a three modular distance learning teacher training course with an international certificate level examination as a benchmark (The Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test) and a British Council Sri Lanka / CBB Certificate of Teaching' (British Council, 2008).

The training follows a modified shallow cascade model. The mentors, staff from the network of 30 Regional English Support Centres (RESCs) which come under the government's National Institute of Education, initially followed the course themselves, and received trainer training from British Council trainers in Colombo and Kandy. They then mentored teachers on the course. The course itself is self-access, with trainees coming together for study sessions moderated by the mentors, who also carry out observations of the trainees. But the cascade stops there, rather than those trained by the mentor then delivering the course; it is the mentors who support participants again and again, meeting annually to discuss delivery. This shallowness in a cascade stops dilution of the messages, and has been seen to work well in the Sri Lankan context (Hayes, 2002; Kennett, 2005).

The project has grown from eight to 29 RESCs (there are 30 countrywide), trained 61 mentors, and so far reached 1,117 teachers. The majority of teachers have taken the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT); for example, from the first batch 46 out of the 48. Out of the four bands (four being the highest), three has been scored most commonly, showing 'breadth and depth of knowledge of TKT content areas', followed by two, which demonstrates 'basic, but systematic knowledge of TKT content areas'. Bands one and four are relatively infrequent, with band four appearing far more than band one. The content areas, the three modules of TKT, are:

- Language and the background to language learning and teaching
- Lesson planning and use of resources for language teaching
- Managing the teaching and learning process

Award ceremonies have attracted some high profile guests including, in 2010, the Minister of Education; an advantage from working within (and thereby supporting) existing government systems.

Previous Evaluation of CBB Teacher Training Project

Annual reports have been presented to the Council for Business with Britain, as the project's funder. These have focused on project activity and numbers reached. In addition, in 2014, a report was produced summarising monitoring visits to 18 RESCs carried out between 12/11/13 and 5/2/14. The visits looked at the administration and conduct of the course and mentoring, and made suggestions for improving both. Many mentors mentioned positive cooperation from school principals, and this was echoed by the teachers (and in the findings of this evaluation). Other common threads emerging from the visits included 'committed and enthusiastic' mentors, 'eager and motivated trainees', and generally good course administration. On the other hand, not all mentors always practice the sort of participatory approach in their workshops that they are meant to be encouraging (Mutch, 2014).

There have also been two attempts to assess language improvements in the pupils themselves, the ultimate goal of the project. The first, in 2010, looked at teachers who followed the course in 2009-10, comparing the results of their grade 9 and 10 classes in December 2008 and December 2009. Data collection proved problematic and so the sample was small. Results suggested a positive effect on exam results caused by following the course, but the size of the sample made such a conclusion tentative.

In the second assessment, in 2012, c. 200 pupils were tested on paper with the Oxford Placement Test, some in classes taught by teachers following the course, and some in control classes. Half that number also had their oral skills tested (a much more labour intensive process) with a British Council written speaking test. Improvements in oral skills were much more significant with the pupils under project trained teachers than in the control groups, while in the written paper there was no significant change. As most of the tests were only three months apart, any significant change in this latter would have been surprising, but the significant change in oral skills in a relatively short time was highly encouraging.

Methodology

In late January 2014 letters were sent to all RESCs enclosing a letter to be forwarded to teachers who had completed the CBB-sponsored course. Teachers were asked to copy their pre-course and post-course observation sheets and return these to their RESC, for forwarding to the British Council. 127 complete sets (pre-course and post-course) were analysed to track improvements against the observation criteria, as discussed below.

The letter also included a questionnaire, which those who had followed the course in 2011 or earlier were asked to complete and, again, return to their RESC for forwarding. 143 were collated, and the findings are also analysed below.

In addition, 5 RESCs were chosen for independent observations and focus groups. The focus groups were with a group who completed the course in 2013, and with a group who had not followed it. The discussions were semi-structured, in that they followed a set of questions. In each RESC three teachers were observed, one who had not followed the course, one who had done it in 2013, and one who had done it in 2011 or earlier. The observer did not know which teacher belonged to which category until after the observation of all three in each area. These independent observations, and the focus groups, are also discussed below.

Finally, background reading covered project documents and some readings about English Language teaching and learning in Sri Lanka, and the RESC network (Hayes, 2002; Kennett, 2005; Dick, 2012).

Findings

Review of Pre-Course and Post-Course Observation Sheets

127 pre-observation sheets (pre-OS) were included, and the same number of post observation sheets (post-OS). There were 8 additional sheets received that were either duplications, or a pre-OS without the matching post-OS, or vice versa. (Furthermore, a further 38 pre-OS and 36 post-OS were received after the compilation was carried out. These have been retained, but not included). The first point to note is the high response rate, with over 160 teachers returning their observation sheets, having been asked to do the copying themselves, and return the sheets to the RESC for forwarding. This itself can be read as signifying approval of the course, although possibly the result is only representative of the population of teachers who have followed the course and feel that they have benefitted from it, and those who do not feel such a benefit are not included in the results. The sheets included came from 15 out of the 27 RESCs that had implemented the course by 2011.

The pre-OS reflected an average class size of 29.2 (chart 1) while the post-OS reflected an average class size of 28.85 (chart 2). The majority of the classes observed being in junior secondary school in both cases (71% & 73% respectively being in grades six to ten inclusive). The class size appears small compared to the average size of classes observed by the consultant, which was 35.9. However, the teachers were probably tending to choose smaller classes where possible in the belief that they would better be able to manage them, and conduct more communicative activities more successfully.

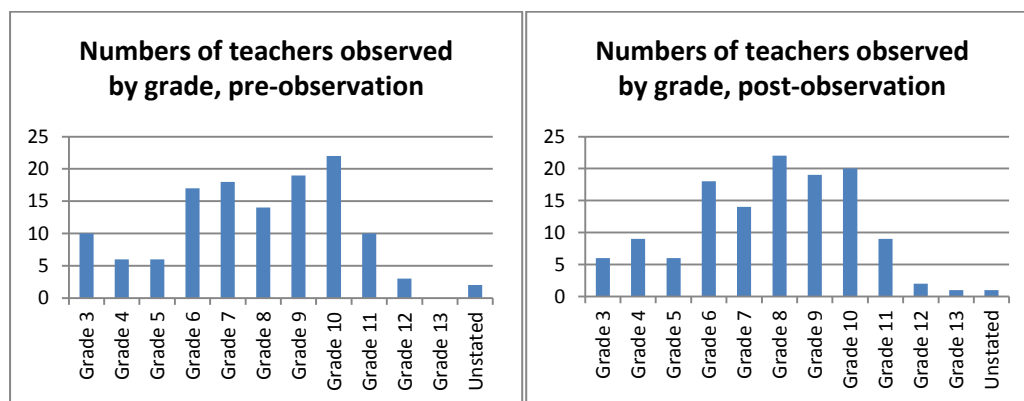


Chart 1

Chart 2

An immediate problem in collating the observation sheets was the fact that they changed in 2012. The original version had 21 criteria to be graded as 'yes', 'no' or 'to some extent (TSE)' and the modified one 23. 15 criteria remained the same, one was dropped, two new ones were added, and the rest had minor alterations. This meant some discretion had to be used in collating results from the two feedback forms; see Appendix 2 for the collated version used in this report, with comments on the differences and decisions made in collating.

The contrast between the pre-OS results and those of the post-OS can be seen by comparing chart 3 and chart 4. It is immediately striking what an improvement is recorded. Every one of the 24 indicators sees improvement, and every improvement is in double figures, bar one at 9.9 percentage points (chart 5). The improvement was greater than 50 percentage points with four of the indicators, and greater than 20 percentage points with 20 of the 24; especially impressive when you consider that eight indicators (a third of them) were already showing a 'yes' score of over 50% in the pre-OS. This strong improvement appears to be across the board, affecting lesson planning, classroom management, and an increased student-focus/involvement. The latter is witnessed most spectacularly by the indicator 'Teacher encouraged student talk and controlled teacher talk', which had the lowest 'yes' score in the pre-OS at 18.5%. It saw the most improvement, increasing by just under 55 percentage points to 73%. At the same time, the 'no' responses to this item fell from 20% (higher than the 'yes' responses) to under 1%. This indicates a very strong shift from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching. Similarly 'Teacher

encouraged students to help and teach each other' started with more 'no' than 'yes' responses initially (36.4% to 24%) and saw a marked fall in the 'no' responses as well as an increase in the 'yes' ones (moved to 8.5% and 55%). This indicator in fact has the highest level of 'no' responses in the post-OS (at 8.5%), meaning *all* 'no' responses fell to single figures. It is also the second lowest scorer of 'yes' responses in the post-OS. The lowest, and the only one scoring under 50%, is 'Teacher used mime, gesture / body language'. With these two being the lowest scorers in the post-OS, is it that the teacher needs to retain a 'teacherly' manner, retaining a considerable amount of control especially in presentation stages, and a 'teacherly' dignity, which would preclude mime and extravagant gesture or expression? If so, is this culturally determined?

All other indicators scored a 'yes' rating of at least 60% in the post-OS. Those 'only' in the 60's concerned feedback (60% 'yes') and error (62.6% 'yes'), related areas which it would appear would benefit from further work (although already significantly improved, the 'yes' ratings having risen by 19.7 percentage points and 37.8 percentage points respectively).

Within this overwhelmingly positive view there are local differences. Hanguranketha (11 observation sets returned) had 9 criteria at 100% 'yes' in the pre-OS, increasing to 20 for the post-OS. One criterion (feedback) actually declined by c. 10% (i.e. one fewer 'yes'). In Anuradhapura (seven returns) five criteria had fewer 'yes' responses in the post-OS. In Moneragala all criteria moved in the desired direction, but this mostly meant from 'to some extent' to 'yes', as there were only two instances of 'no' in the pre-OS. In Polonnaruwa (eight returns), there was a move from 'yes' as well as 'no' to use of mime and gesture, and feedback also had fewer 'yes' responses in the second observation. Kurunegala (11 returns) saw sweeping improvements, except in instructions, which stuck obstinately at 100% 'to some extent' in both observations. In total nine RESCs returned more than five sets of observations. A further six returned up to five, and these are included in the 'misc RESC' category (total of 17 complete responses in this category). The RESC by RESC comparison of pre-OS and post-OS is produced in Appendix 3.

That there are local differences is not surprising, and there are several possible reasons. Some parts of the country are more attractive for well-qualified teachers, including cities (e.g. Matara) and most of Western Province (e.g. Gampaha), and may be expected to attract and retain more competent teachers. Some RESCs cover a far larger area than others, and find it more or less difficult to reach teachers at more outlying schools. Teachers have come for input in Matara from Deniyaya, for example, a journey of 67km by bus, while some other RESCs serve equally large divisions but ones with poor transport links, which would make a regular journey of that distance impractical. Then there are differences in interpretation of the criteria from RESC coordinator to RESC coordinator (the vast majority of teachers had the same observer for the pre-OS & post-OS, though, so there is at least consistency here).

Finally, it could be supposed that the observers, who also play a part in the training team, are not independent in that role, and are bound to produce more positive results in post-course observations. This is why independent, blind observations were also carried out, and these are considered in the next section.

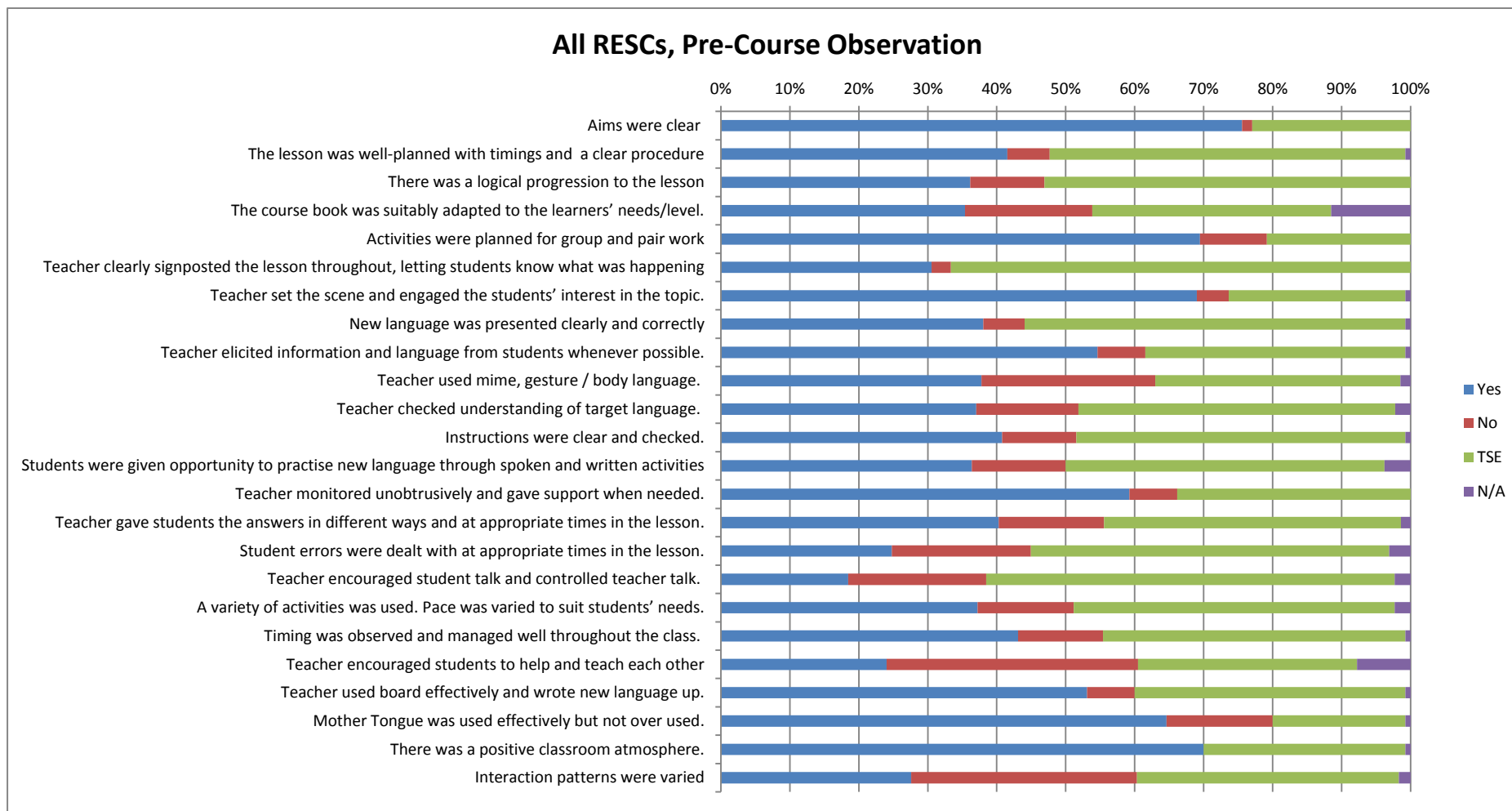


Chart 3

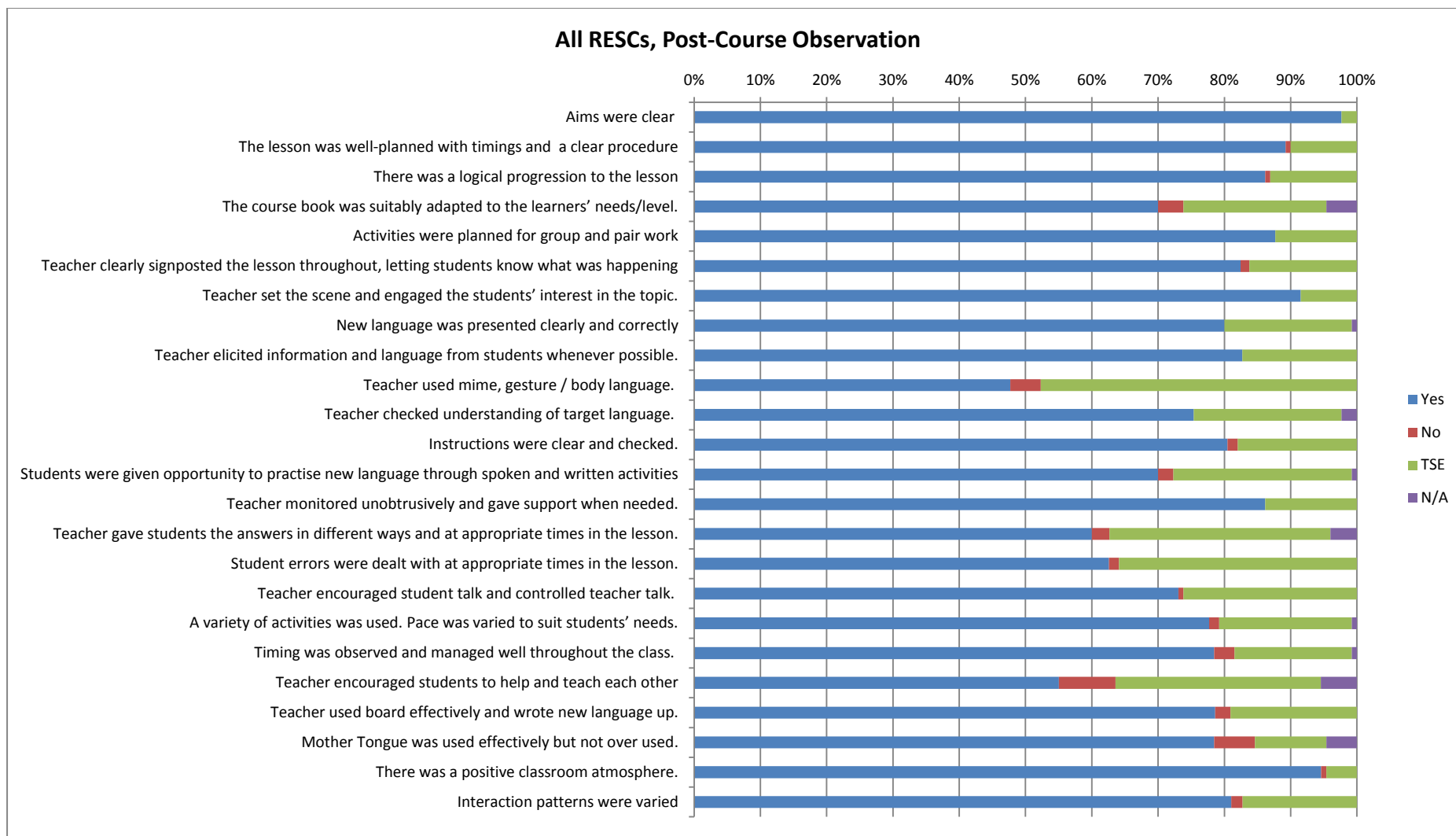


Chart 4

	Indicator	Percentage point Improvement
1	Teacher encouraged student talk and controlled teacher talk.	54.6
2	Interaction patterns were varied	53.4
3	Teacher clearly signposted the lesson throughout, letting students know what was happening	51.9
4	There was a logical progression to the lesson	50.0
5	The lesson was well-planned with timings and a clear procedure	47.7
6	New language was presented clearly and correctly	41.9
7	A variety of activities was used. Pace was varied to suit students' needs.	40.5
8	Instructions were clear and checked.	39.7
9	Teacher checked understanding of target language.	38.3
10	Student errors were dealt with at appropriate times in the lesson.	37.8
11	Timing was observed and managed well throughout the class.	35.4
12	The course book was suitably adapted to the learners' needs/level.	34.6
13	Students were given opportunity to practise new language through spoken and written activities	33.6
14	Teacher encouraged students to help and teach each other	31.0
15	Teacher elicited information and language from students whenever possible.	28.1
16	Teacher monitored unobtrusively and gave support when needed.	26.9
17	Teacher used board effectively and wrote new language up.	25.5
18	There was a positive classroom atmosphere.	24.6
19	Teacher set the scene and engaged the students' interest in the topic.	22.5
20	Aims were clear	22.1
21	Teacher gave students the answers in different ways and at appropriate times in the lesson.	19.7
22	Activities were planned for group and pair work	18.2
23	Mother Tongue was used effectively but not over used.	13.8
24	Teacher used mime, gesture / body language.	9.9

Chart 5

Independent Observations

There is a risk that the RESC staff in carrying out observations are influenced, however subconsciously, into giving gentler interpretations of the criteria in post-OS, to demonstrate the beneficial effect of the training they deliver. So, it was decided to test the results of the observations under five RESCs through independent, blind observations. 'Independent' in that the observer had not met any of the teachers previously, nor most of the RESC staff, and 'blind' in that he did not know the status vis-à-vis the training programme of any teacher he observed until after he had observed all three teachers under any RESC; one who had not followed the programme, one who had followed it in 2013, and one who had followed it in 2011 or earlier.

Five RESCs were chosen to give a broadly representative cross-section of the population. Gampaha is a sizable town in the populous and prosperous Western Province, some 30km from the capital, Colombo. Matara is a commercial city near the southernmost tip of the island. Both have a Sinhala majority, as does Mahiyangana, which lies in an agricultural part of Uva province, to the East of the central hills. North East from there, Batticaloa is a Tamil majority coastal city, badly affected both by the civil war and the Asian tsunami (which latter also severely affected Matara). Finally, Bandarawella is a mixed Sinhala/Tamil town in the Eastern hills, surrounded by tea plantations. It also has a significant Moslem population, as does Matara (the Moslems are usually considered a separate ethnicity in Sri Lanka).

The RESC coordinators were free to choose which schools should be visited. As all three observations needed to happen in a single school day, they inevitably all had to be in schools close to the RESC. In both Bandarawella and Matara the coordinator chose one large school which could supply a teacher from each category. In Matara, the coordinator deliberately did not choose one of the better-resourced schools, going instead for one which mostly caters for children from villages to the East of the city. This was because he thought it would be more representative of education in the district. In Bandarawella, a large girls' school extremely close to the RESC could supply all three teachers, and was chosen for convenience. In Batticaloa, the coordinator wanted the observer to see a range of schools, so chose a large well-resourced 'National' school in the town centre, a poorer school on the outskirts of town, and a sizable school a short distance outside town. Two schools were visited in each of the other two centres.

All coordinators remembered not to give any information on the teachers and whether and when they had followed the course until after the observations, and the teachers had also been briefed not to let this slip. The observer used the current observation sheet as used as pre-OS and post-OS, but adapted it to a five point Likert scale (see Appendix 4). For each criterion, 1 was awarded for 'never' 5 for 'frequently/always' and for each teacher the total was added up and divided by the number of criteria scored (some were 'not applicable' in some observations) to give an overall score, shown in chart 6. In the first three locations, the observer's impression (once course history had been revealed) was that it was the teacher who had followed the course three to five years previously who was the strongest classroom performer, followed by the teacher who had done it the previous year, with the teacher who had not done the course fairly easily identifiable. In fact, when scores were computed, in location two the teacher who had completed the course the previous year scored marginally higher than the one who had done it earlier. The difference between the impression and the calculated score may indicate that the observation sheet could have benefited from differently weighting various criteria.

The developing hypothesis that the benefit of the training takes some time to be fully realised was somewhat spoiled by the last two sets of observations. In the final set, the teacher who had followed the course in 2013 clearly scored higher than the colleague who had done it earlier (and the observer's impression agreed with the score) and in the penultimate set, it was the teacher who had first received the training who scored lowest (and again this was a clear impression). Still, in four out of five locations, the teacher who had not followed the course was readily identifiable, and even in the fifth that can also be said in relation to one of the two teachers who had followed the course. Significantly, it was not as if the coordinators were deliberately choosing poor teachers to be observed in the category of 'not followed the course' so as to better reflect on their alumni; all those observed who had not followed the course aspired to, and were seen by the coordinators as potential candidates. While it is notable enough that nine out of ten observed teachers who had received training scored higher than the colleague in the same area who had not, it is also worth adding some comments made by the RESC coordinator in that single exception. The teacher in question had been in the very first batch to follow the course under that RESC, and had been put forward for semi-political reasons, as a long standing teacher from an area with a shortage of teachers (34% of posts vacant) where many of the teachers are imports from more affluent parts of the country, who serve four to five years and depart. It would need a larger sample to see whether lower performance among those who have been trained continued to register at around 10%, and to see more of a pattern (if there is one) between those who have done it recently or two to five years previously, but the observations clearly showed a benefit to teaching from following the course.

¹ In this school the observer saw children (many of whom had lost one or both parents in the war or the tsunami) being supplied with their daily free meal from the government.

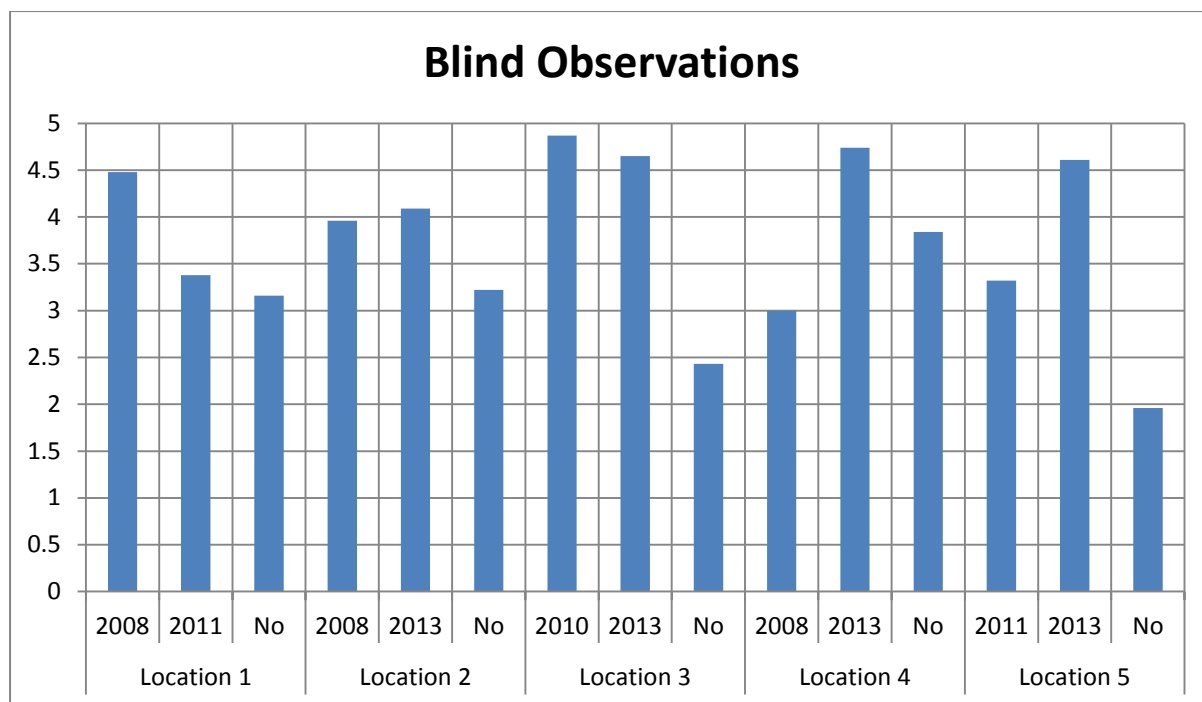


Chart 6

As well as the 23 criteria of the current post-OS, the independent blind observations recorded classroom activity every five minutes. This is quite a long gap between such recordings, necessary as it was one of two tools being used. As a result several shifts of interaction and activity focus will have been missed, but they will have been missed in all three categories of teachers, so the results should still be broadly indicative.

Results from this measure are reproduced in charts 7, 8 and 9. The first striking difference is that Teacher talk/Teacher fronted-activity accounts for 56% of the time in the classes of those who have not followed the course, and falls to 43% or 42% in the two groups of teachers who have. Conversely, student talking rises from 9% to 23% or 24% for speaking, and the category 'other' which accounts for reading aloud in chart 7, represents singing (a far more pedagogically justifiable activity) in chart 8. If the single teacher discussed above is taken out of the calculation, the figure for teacher talk in chart 9 falls to 39%, that for student talk rises to 30%, and for student writing to 19%; student production outstripping teacher production by 10%), but there is no reason to take her out, just to note her impact on the result.

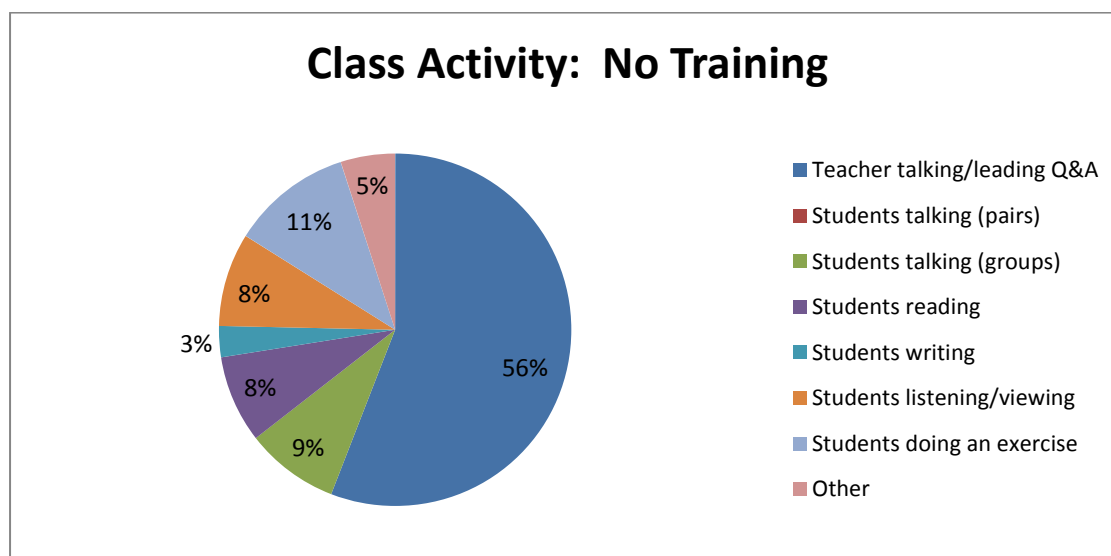


Chart 7

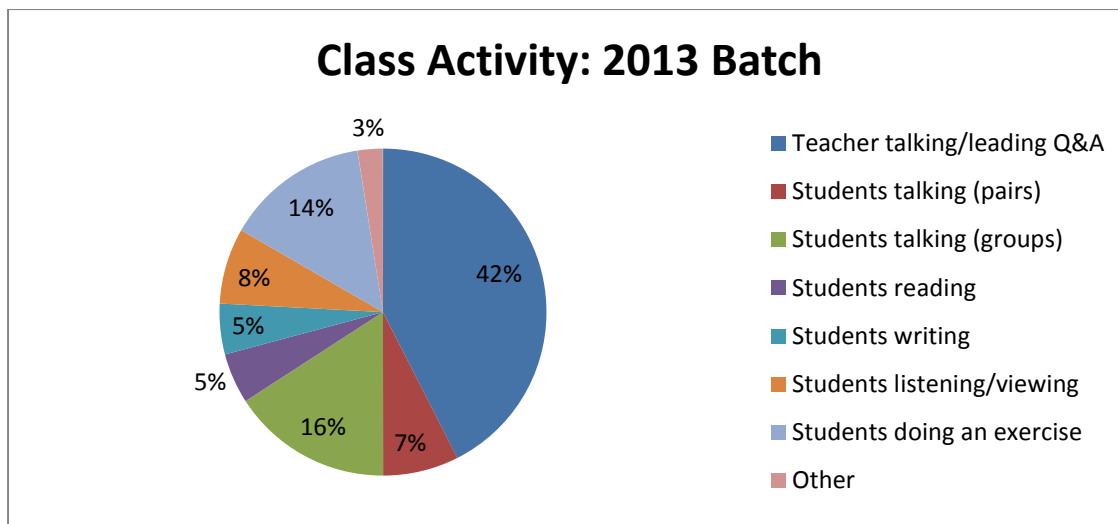


Chart 8

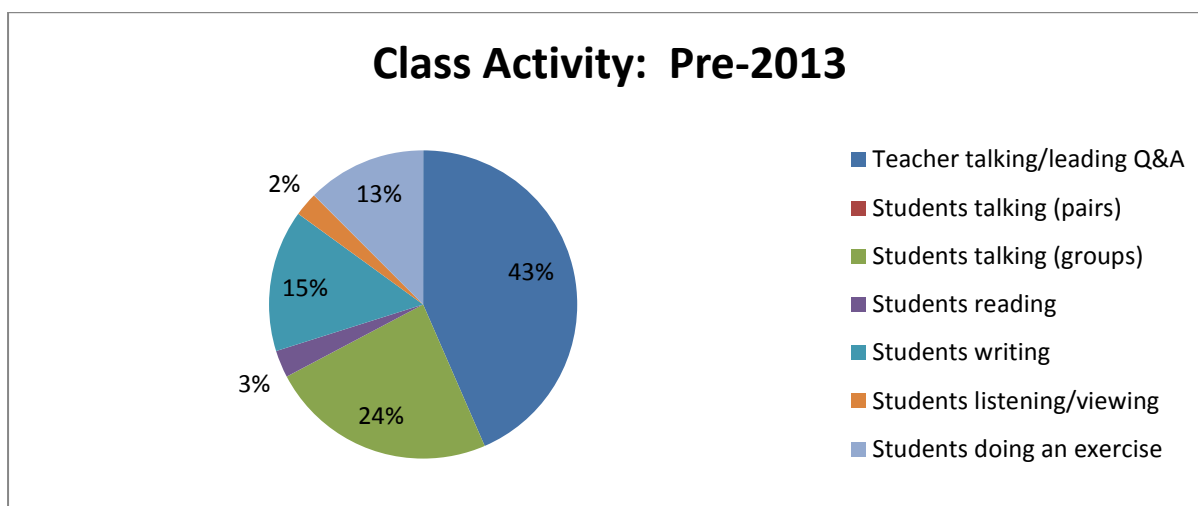


Chart 9

In conclusion, the independent blind observations verified improved performance against the pre- and post-OS criteria among those who have followed the course. Additionally, an activity log showed a significant move from teacher-centred lessons to student-centred ones, in which students were expected to produce far more language.

Teacher Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held at each of the five RESCs visited, except for Matara, as teachers were mostly involved in sports meets in that city at that time. In each, one focus group was with teachers who had completed the course the previous year. See Appendix 5 for focus group questions. Attendance was from a possible six in each centre, and was four, four, three and seven, but in this last only two had done it in 2013, the rest earlier. Average length of service was 19.2 years. A minority had degrees in education or diploma level teaching qualifications, most had certificates from teacher training colleges.

Some had followed (or were following) external diploma or degree courses, but all had regularly attended workshops at the RESCs, and workshops conducted by government In Service Advisors. There was a unanimous feeling that the former were more valuable than the latter. Training organized by the district office tended to be about rules and regulations, and were characterized as 'lecture-based', 'ill-planned' and 'badly-organised'. Whereas training from the RESC was seen as 'enjoyable', 'participatory', 'well planned', and relevant to classroom practice. This platform of trust in the RESCs has probably been crucial in the success of the project.

The teachers found the application process for TKT comfortable, and put themselves forward (often when prompted by the RESC) because they felt a need to refresh their training. Many knew teachers who had done it before, and benefitted. They were also encouraged by the British Council involvement. Participation was challenging, but manageable. Homework was often done once the children had been put to bed. It was seen as a worthwhile effort. Many benefits were mentioned, the most frequent included lesson planning, phonology, error correction, understanding of students' learning styles and motivations, and confidence. There were far fewer comments on gaps in the course, and none were repeated between groups. All groups said that their students participated in class more than previously. All groups also said that colleagues in their schools had come to them for advice and/or peer observations. Most had had no formal recognition of their achievement, nor concrete plans on how to continue professional development other than going over their materials, although one teacher had recently joined a BA programme with the Open University of Sri Lanka. Suggestions included more on phonology, the inclusion of more than six in a cohort, and (from two groups) involvement of native speakers, live, or by watching video.

The second focus group was with teachers who had not followed the course. Attendance was four, nine, five and five. Average length of service was 10.3 years (but was 15.9 years when one centre with strikingly recent recruits to the profession is removed, with nine teachers with a maximum of three years' service). This group had more diploma holders, especially among those with a shorter period of service, suggesting an increased focus on teacher training from the authorities. Comments about training from the RESCs and the district offices echoed those reported above. A wide range of wished for areas of improvement (all attending hoped to follow the course) were mentioned, including methodology update/refresher, teaching pronunciation, skills generally, speaking specifically, preparing materials and activities, and motivating children. The desire to follow the course was motivated by a desire to improve as teachers; professional advancement was not mentioned at all. Trust that the RESCs can deliver was mentioned again. Most attending had worked with colleagues who had undergone the training previously, and they had seen the benefit in their colleagues' teaching. Generally, the teachers said that they would prefer to follow the course face to face, to share ideas in a group. In some parts of the country they reported that connectivity is unreliable.

In conclusion, what emerges from these focus groups was (a) the dedication of the teachers, who made (or were prepared to make) sacrifices in their home lives, and spend a large amount of extra time, purely to better themselves as teachers, for the performance of their duties in class, with no thought to personal advancement within the profession and (b) the high regard among teachers for the RESCs and RESC staff, and the service that they provide.

Teacher Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent to RESCs for distribution to those who had followed the course in 2011 or earlier. These were anonymous, see Appendix 6. There were 143 returns representing 18 RESCs received by the time collating started. A further 42 questionnaires were received later, and not included. This high response rate in itself suggests satisfaction with the course. While a small number of teachers had in fact done the course after 2011, the largest number had done it that year, with declining returns stretching back historically:

2007	5 returns
2008	21 returns
2009	30 returns
2010	34 returns
2011	48 returns
2012	3 returns
2013	1 return

There was also one return which did not mention the year. Surprisingly, only two returns mentioned that they had been transferred to an area under a different RESC since doing the course.

Teachers reported on their attendance record as follows:

100%	91 returns
95%	23 returns
90%	12 returns

85%	0 returns
80%	3 returns
75%	3 returns
Less than 75%	1 returns
Unmentioned	10 returns

This has not been checked against actual records of attendance, but does seem to agree with anecdotal evidence given by RESC staff. It certainly reflects a memory of the course being motivating enough that attendance was either 100% or very close in the vast majority of cases.

The next two questions concerned an appraisal of the course mentors. Each was on a five point Likert scale, with '1' being the most positive. One question (results on the left below) was about the helpfulness of the mentors, while the second (on the right) asked about their ability to deliver the training in a 'participatory, interactive way', i.e. to reflect in their training what the teachers were being asked to do in their teaching.

Question 5: helpfulness of mentors		Question 6: interactivity of training	
1	119 returns	1	122 returns
2	21 returns	2	19 returns
3	1 return	3	1 return
4	1 return	4	
5		5	
Unmentioned	1 return	Unmentioned	1 return

These returns really need no gloss, especially in light of the already reported high regard in which RESC training is viewed (see section on teacher focus groups). There is, however, a contradiction between the teachers' response to question 6, and the observation by some British Council observers in the 2014 monitoring report (see above) that not all mentors always demonstrate a participatory approach. Further research would be useful.

The questionnaire then moves to content, and teachers are asked to mention which (up to three) areas of the course had been most helpful. Not all respondents put anything, and some put only one or two areas. Chart 10 shows all areas with more than ten responses. Some needed a degree of interpretation, or including in higher level categories (such as 'word stress' under 'phonology') so a different reviewer of the questionnaires may produce a slightly different result.

Rank	Area	Responses	Rank	Area	Responses
1	Lesson planning	79	8	Language & learning	21
2	Classroom Management	45	9	Listening	16
3	Error	43	10	Speaking	15
4	Phonology	36	11=	Activities	14
5	Materials	35	11=	Reading	14
6	Grammar	31	14	Writing	10
7	Learners	22			

Chart 10

However, there is no doubt that lesson planning was the front runner by a considerable distance. As Scrivener points out, it is helpful to know what you want to achieve, and think this through. While a teacher will always need to think on her feet, 'planning increases the number of your options – and [...] increases your chances of a successful lesson' (Scrivener, 2005, p. 109). From the observations, it is clear that the teachers were planning more communicative, child-friendly lessons. Classroom management may be a surprise at number two, as the teachers will have learnt a lot about managing classes on the job. But it seems that they are welcoming the chance to rethink this area, which supports the idea of them moving from being 'the explainer' to being 'the involver' as teachers, maybe even with elements of 'the enabler' (Scrivener, 2005, p. 25). Error came next, and of the 43 responses, 23 were specifically about using a correction code for correcting written work. This was mentioned in focus groups, too, and seems to have been something of a 'light bulb moment' for the teachers. It is another indication of moving towards more student-led methods. Phonology was not a surprise, as many teachers in Sri Lanka express an anxiety about teaching this, and especially word and sentence stress. 'Materials' was mostly about selecting, adapting or creating materials, to introduce variety in class, 'grammar' includes seven responses for 'presenting language' (which does not *necessarily* mean grammar), and 'learners' included

'motivation'. 'Language and learning' included responses for 'background to language and learning' as well as 'describing language and learning'. The four language skills bring up the rear, along with 'activities', appearing to be to do with using a variety of activities, or broadening a teacher's repertoire of classroom activities.

The next question, still on content, asked what improvements could be made. This question had far fewer responses, but the responses covered a much larger area. Keeping to reporting the same number of responses as the previous question takes us down into single figures, as seen in chart 11.

Rank	Area	Responses	Rank	Area	Responses
1	Speaking	28	7=	More observations	14
2	Phonology	27	9	Listening	11
3	Grammar	21	10	Vocabulary	10
4=	More model lessons	20	11	Learners	9
4=	Lesson planning	20	12=	Provide materials	8
6	Longer course	15	12=	Writing	8
7=	Materials	14	12=	Past papers/practice	8

Chart 11

It is interesting that lesson planning still comes out reasonably high, but not surprising that phonology scores highly. Speaking is first choice (a short head this time), which shows that the teachers want to see even more student production in their classes, and want help in providing opportunities. The new areas to emerge in this question are essential practical – having more lessons to observe, being observed more often (with developmental feedback), having a longer course, and having exam practice.

The ninth question concerned self-assessed changes in classroom practice, as seen in chart 12. Most answers were in narrative form, and some of these can be found in Appendix 7. Noticeably, several of the top areas in the first question about content reappear here, indicating that the teachers have consciously tried applying what they have learnt.

Rank	Area	Responses	Rank	Area	Responses
1	Confidence	32	8=	More activities	6
2=	Lesson planning	24	8=	Better results	6
2=	Motivating students	24	10	Lively classes	5
4	More/better methods	23	11=	Better rapport	4
5	Error	16	11=	Understanding mixed ability	4
6	Classroom management	12			
7	More StTT/Less TTT	9			

Chart 12

Asked whether the course had helped their career, 80 teachers said 'no', while 63 said 'yes' (chart 13). 12 reported promotion to Head of English in their school, two to a coordinator position, four to section head, six that they had been put in charge of English Day, and six that they had extra (unspecified) responsibilities. Three said that they had joined the staff of their RESC, and one that s/he had become an In Service Advisor (ISA).

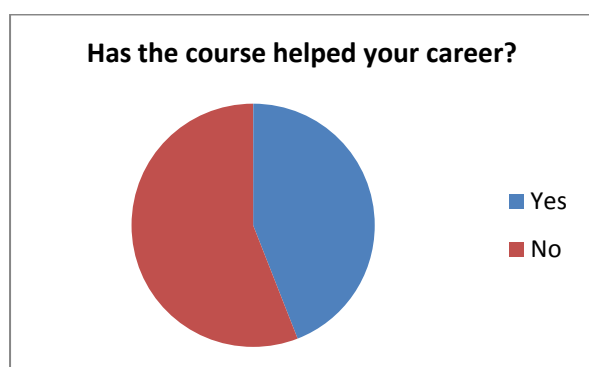


Chart 13

As for the opportunity to cascade training or in some other way support other teachers 103 said that they had (chart 14). Among those who specified how, 22 said that they had shared with colleagues (presumably informally), 16 that they had held cascade sessions in school, and 8 that they had led cascade workshops (presumably more formally).

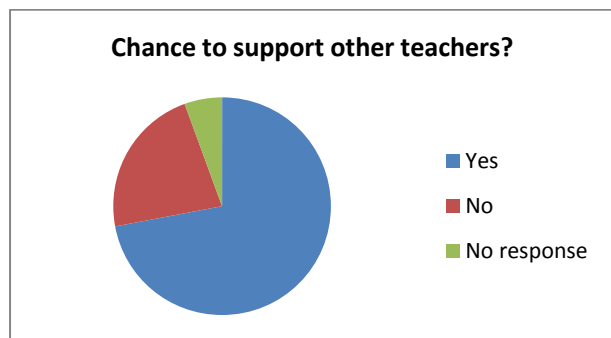


Chart 14

Asked if they would recommend the course to other teachers, there wasn't a single no vote (chart 15). Putting a chart in seems unnecessary, but looks satisfying!

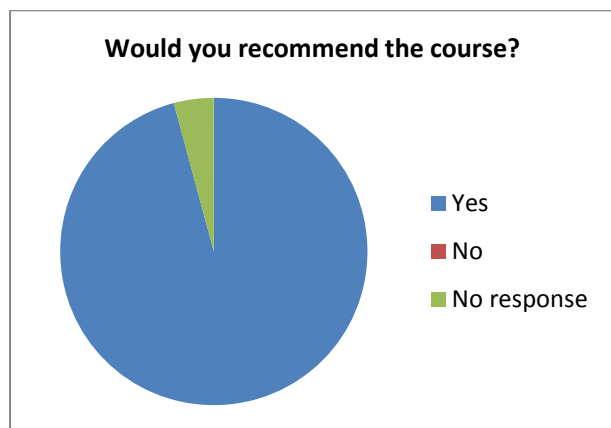


Chart 15

The final question was open, but used by quite a number of respondents. 43 of them put a comment that somehow asked about continuous professional development (CPD); 'what next?' 19 mentioned that the programme should continue and/or be extended, to reach more teachers.

Conclusions

The most important point to consider is to what extent the research hypothesis has been answered, and whether it has been answered encouragingly or not. The hypothesis was:

Trained teachers will display a more communicative classroom methodology than non-trained teachers, and this will be sustained by those who followed the programme three plus years ago.

Considering the evidence above, the trained teachers can very fairly said to be displaying a 'more communicative methodology' than the non-trained teachers, and the benefits of the training is certainly sustained over a period of three plus years. Indeed, it may even be that the beneficial effects take some time to be fully realized, and improvement in methodology continues for some time after the course, as 'new' routines become more practised and more deeply embedded in the teacher's classroom repertoire. The main evidence for this conclusion is:

- The strong improvement seen across the board in all criteria in the pre-course and post-course observation sheets, showing improved planning as well as classroom performance.
- The confirmation of these findings from independent blind observations for 90% of teachers trained.

- The shift of over 10% of classroom time from teacher-centred to student-centred activity seen among those trained.
- Greater confidence among trained teachers, and awareness of their own professional development.

In addition, there can be claimed to be a virtuous circle in that the training is partly successful because of the reputation of the RESCs and the British Council, among teachers, heads of English, and school principals (and the Council for Business with Britain can be added to this now triumvirate as well, as it was mentioned and thanked in many focus group discussions and questionnaires). At the same time, closing the circle, the success of the programme adds to the status and reputation of the three delivery partners.

Another factor in the project's success is that it is aligned to stated government of Sri Lanka education policy, and works within the education system (through the RESCs). This not only avoids any tension between project activity and government programmes, but it also means that the project has countrywide reach, thereby doing something to address existing inequalities in educational opportunities. Furthermore, with the majority of respondents to the questionnaire stating that they have somehow shared their knowledge with colleagues at school, we can be confident that some benefit at least is going further than those directly trained and their students.

Finally, it must be noted that the teachers involved in the project have no remuneration for their involvement in the course and no immediate prospect of promotion or enhanced conditions following it. They spend a considerable amount of their own time to complete the training. Dropout rates are extremely low, attendance extremely high, and no teachers said that they would not recommend the course to colleagues. While this is a huge vote of confidence in the project, it is also a credit to the dedication and commitment of English teachers in Sri Lanka.

Recommendations

To further improve the project, the project managers may consider some of the following areas:

1. Course content
 - a. Further content for phonology (especially word and sentence stress), and in particular a menu of activities (perhaps demonstrated in a session or on DVD) to present and practice pronunciation.
 - b. Further content for practicing speaking, especially fluency practice. Again, this could be a menu of activities, ideally demonstrated and/or practiced in micro-teaching in mentored sessions.
 - c. Production of videos showing lessons to school age children, some shot at the British Council, others in schools, with alumni of the project.
2. Mentor training
 - a. In annual mentor workshops, include refresher trainer training, to maximise trainers' participatory approach in sessions.
3. Further research/evaluation
 - a. Research into student performance, through a longitudinal study. Identify five to ten pupils entering grade six, and follow their English language learning for at least five years, through measuring results and six-monthly interviews (in mother tongue). Select students who are likely to move, year by year, from trained to non-trained teachers and back. How do they perform, and what are their attitudes to the teachers and their classes?
 - b. Conduct more of the independent, blind observations (combined with scheduled RESC visits). Are the findings of this evaluation confirmed over a wider sample, and is there indeed a tendency for improvement to continue in the few years after the course, or does it peak at the end of the course?
 - c. Teacher interviews to determine the reason for reluctance to use mime/gesture/ expression to convey meaning/instructions.
 - d. Teacher interviews also to determine why teachers are relatively reluctant to use students as a resource, to teach each other.
4. Further professional training

- a. As mentioned by so many teachers, what next? Is there any appropriate distance learning to recommend, for example from the Open University of Sri Lanka? Can a system of peer observations be introduced, to help trained teachers support colleagues? What continuous professional development (CPD) pathways are available?

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Appendices

Appendix 1: O Level Results by Province, 2012

Province	Pass	Fail
Western	62.21%	37.79%
North Western	49.22 %	50.78%
Southern	47.76%	52.24%
Central	46.60%	53.40%
Sabaragamuwa	42.06%	57.94%
Eastern	39.02%	60.98%
North Central	35.77%	64.23%
Uva	34.75%	65.25%
Nothern	31.62%	68.38

Appendix 2: Collating results from two observation forms

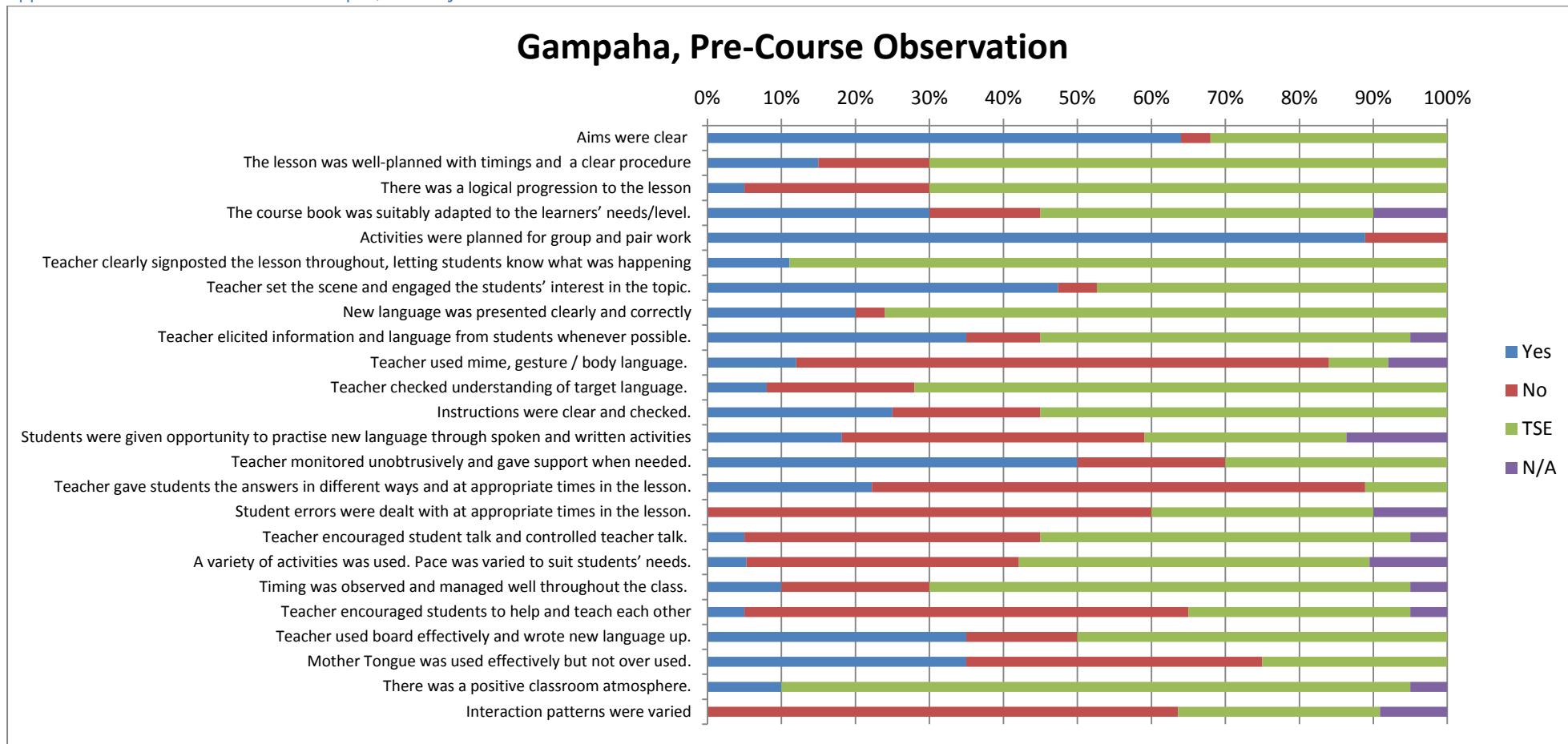
This is the form used for collating results. It is the form introduced in 2012.

Lesson plan and materials		
Aims were clear		No change
The lesson was well-planned with timings and a clear procedure		See 1 below for previous version
There was a logical progression to the lesson		See 2 below for previous version
The course book was suitably adapted to the learners' needs/level.		No change
Activities were planned for group and pair work		New. See 3 below.
Teaching skills during the lesson		
Teacher clearly signposted the lesson throughout, letting students know what was happening		See 2 below.
Teacher set the scene and engaged the students' interest in the topic.		No change
New language was presented clearly and correctly		No change
Teacher elicited information and language from students whenever possible.		No change
Teacher used mime, gesture / body language.		No change
Teacher checked understanding of target language.		No change
Instructions were clear and checked.		No change
Students were given opportunity to practise new language through spoken and written activities		No change
Teacher monitored unobtrusively and gave support when needed.		No change
Teacher gave students the answers in different ways and at appropriate times in the lesson.		New. See 3 below
Student errors were dealt with at appropriate times in the lesson.		See 4 below
Teacher encouraged student talk and controlled teacher talk.		No change
A variety of activities was used. Pace was varied to suit students' needs.		See 5 below
Timing was observed and managed well throughout the class.		No change
Teacher encouraged students to help and teach each other		See 6 below
Teacher used board effectively and wrote new language up.		No change
Mother Tongue was used effectively but not over used.		No change
There was a positive classroom atmosphere.		No change

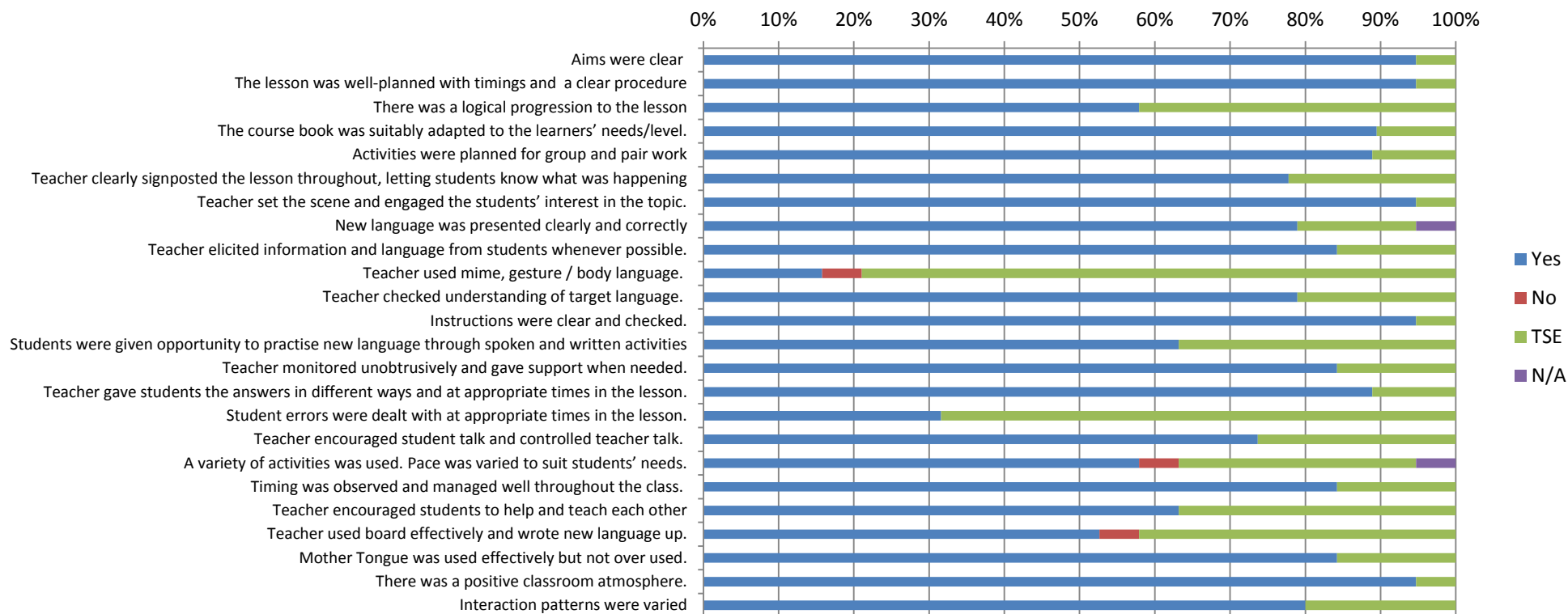
Interaction patterns were varied.	See 7 below
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1. 'The lesson was well-planned with attention to anticipated problems and solutions. Teacher taught the students not the plan.' Presumably cut because earlier version covers planning AND teaching.
2. 'There was a logical progression to the lesson and the teacher clearly signposted the students throughout, letting them know what was happening.' Again, this covers planning AND teaching. On the new form it has been split into 2 criteria. In collating, as planning is mentioned first, returns from this 3-line on the old form were counted with the 3-line on the new form. Therefore the figures for the 1-criterion of 'teaching skills during the lesson' on the new form only includes those observed with the new form.
3. These are returns from the new forms only (2012 & 2013), not the total number.
4. Essentially the same. On previous form, 'Student errors and feedback were dealt with in different ways and at appropriate times in the lesson.'
5. Almost exactly the same. On previous form, 'A variety of tasks/activities was used. Pace was varied to suit students' needs.'
6. Essentially the same. On previous form, 'Teacher encouraged peer teaching.'
7. Dropped altogether in new form. In new form, the new line 'activities were planned for group and pair work' could be said to cover the same area, but the one appears to cover the planning stage, and the other execution. They were therefore not counted together, and so in the results the returns against this criterion reflect the old forms, only.

Appendix 3: Pre & Post Observation Graphs, RESC by RESC



Gampaha, Post-Course Observation



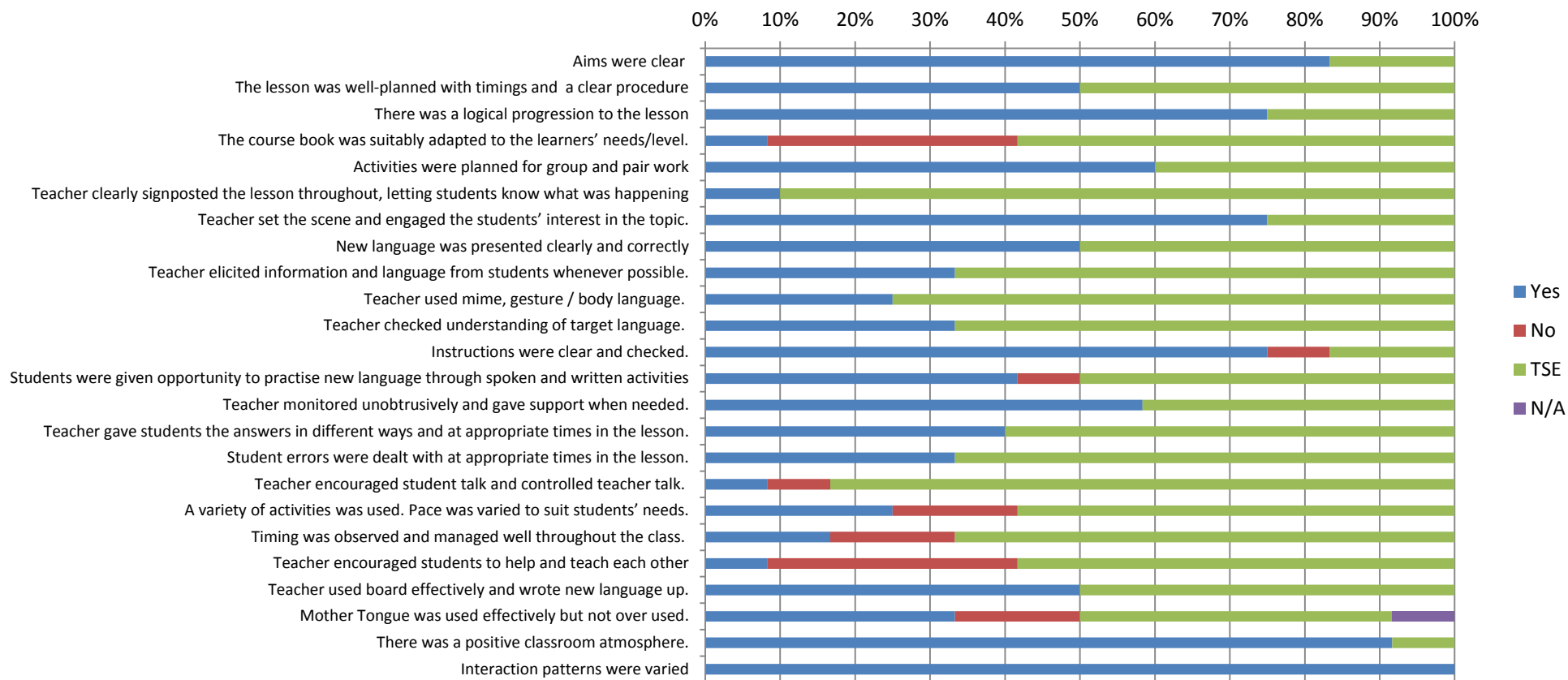
Matara, Pre-Course Observation



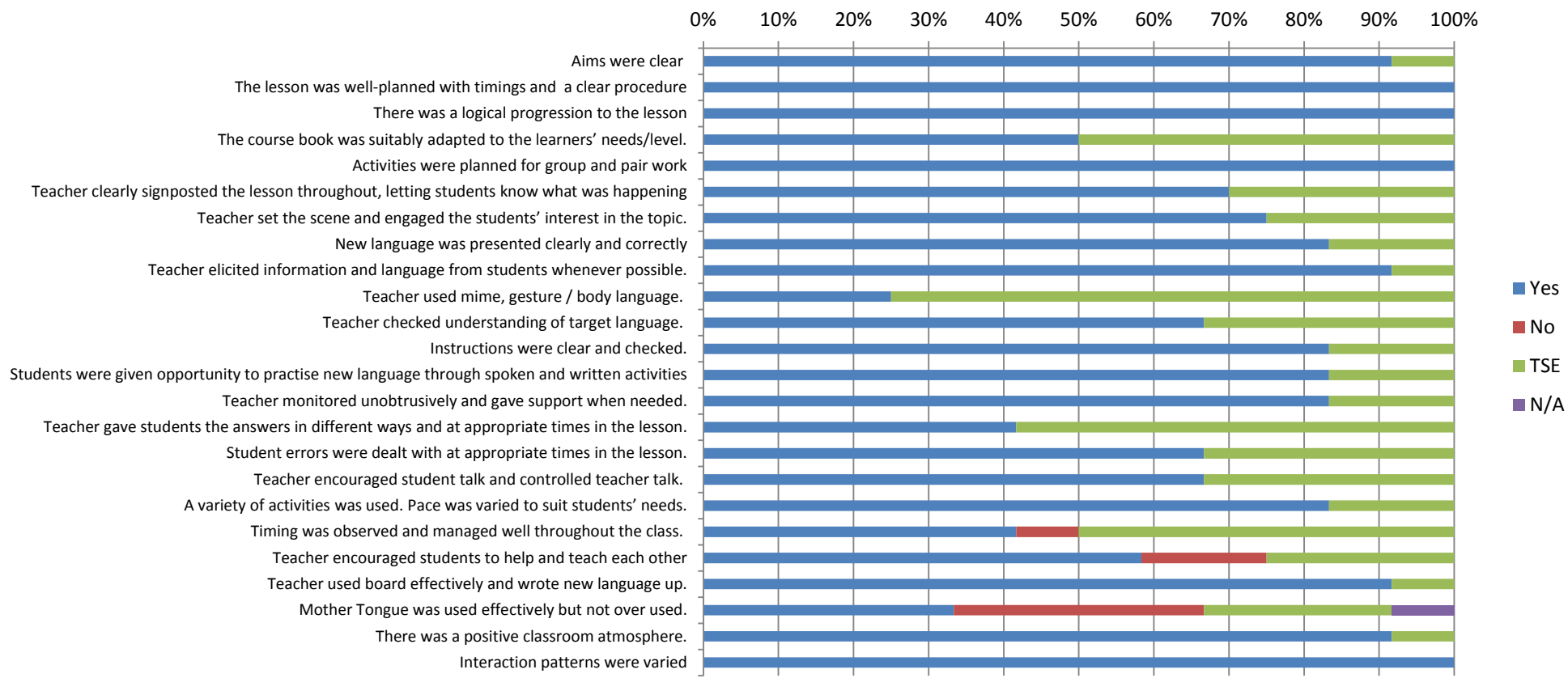
Matara, Post-Course Observation



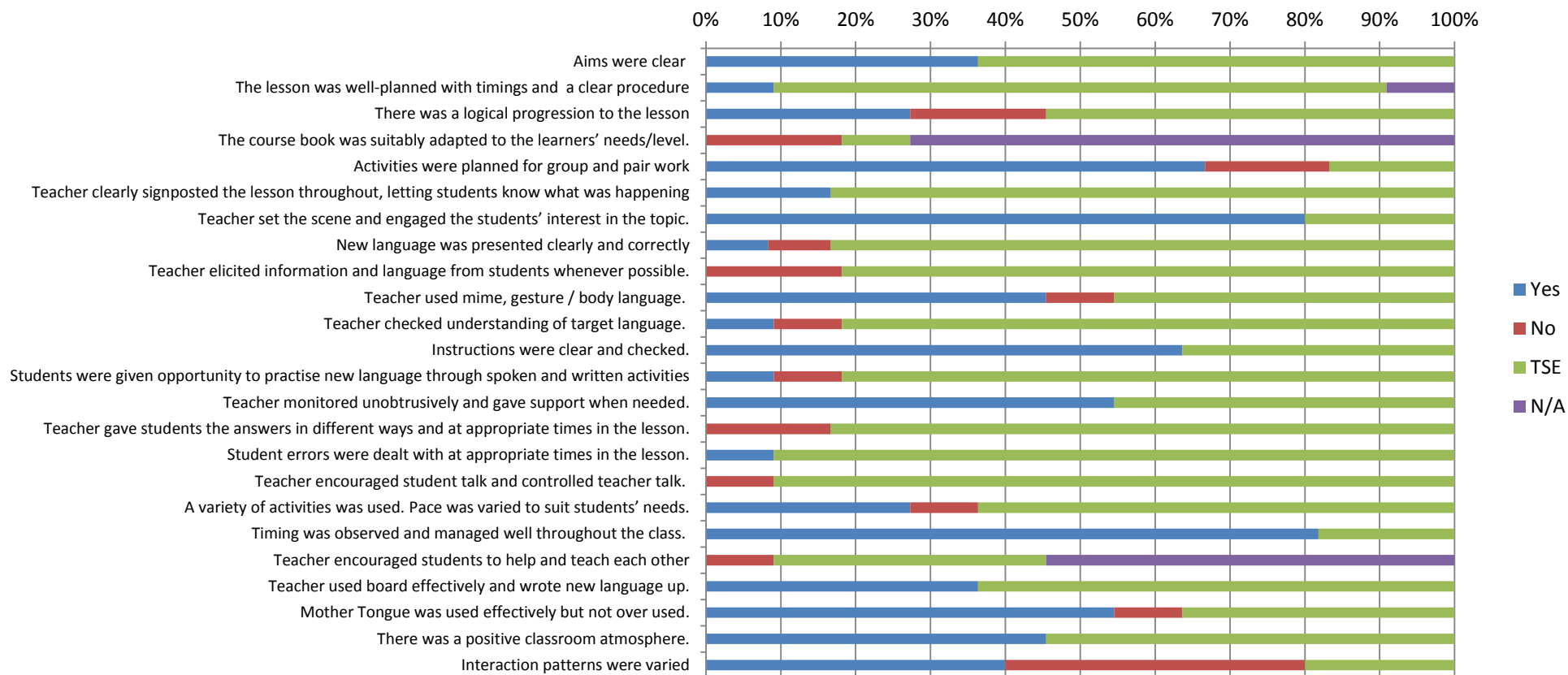
Jaffna, Pre-Course Observations



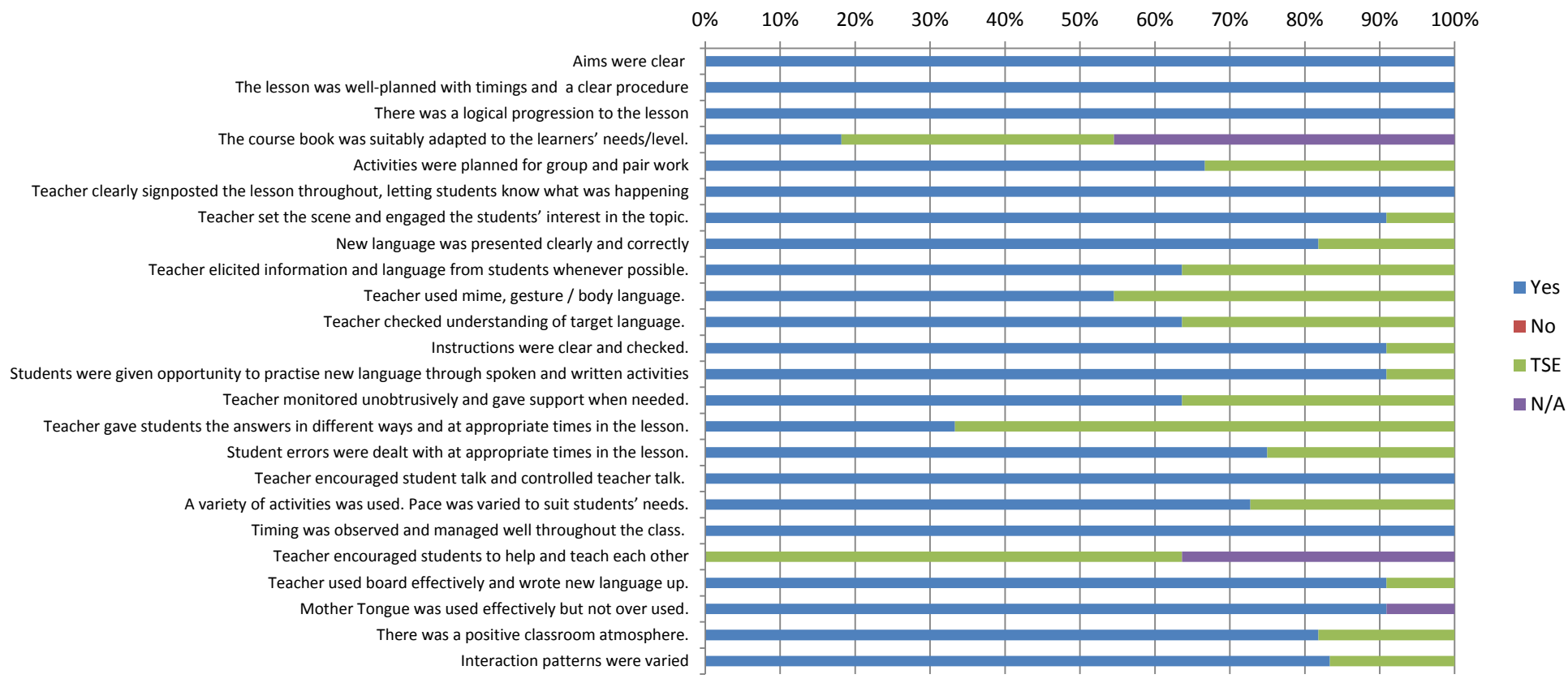
Jaffna, Post-Course Observations



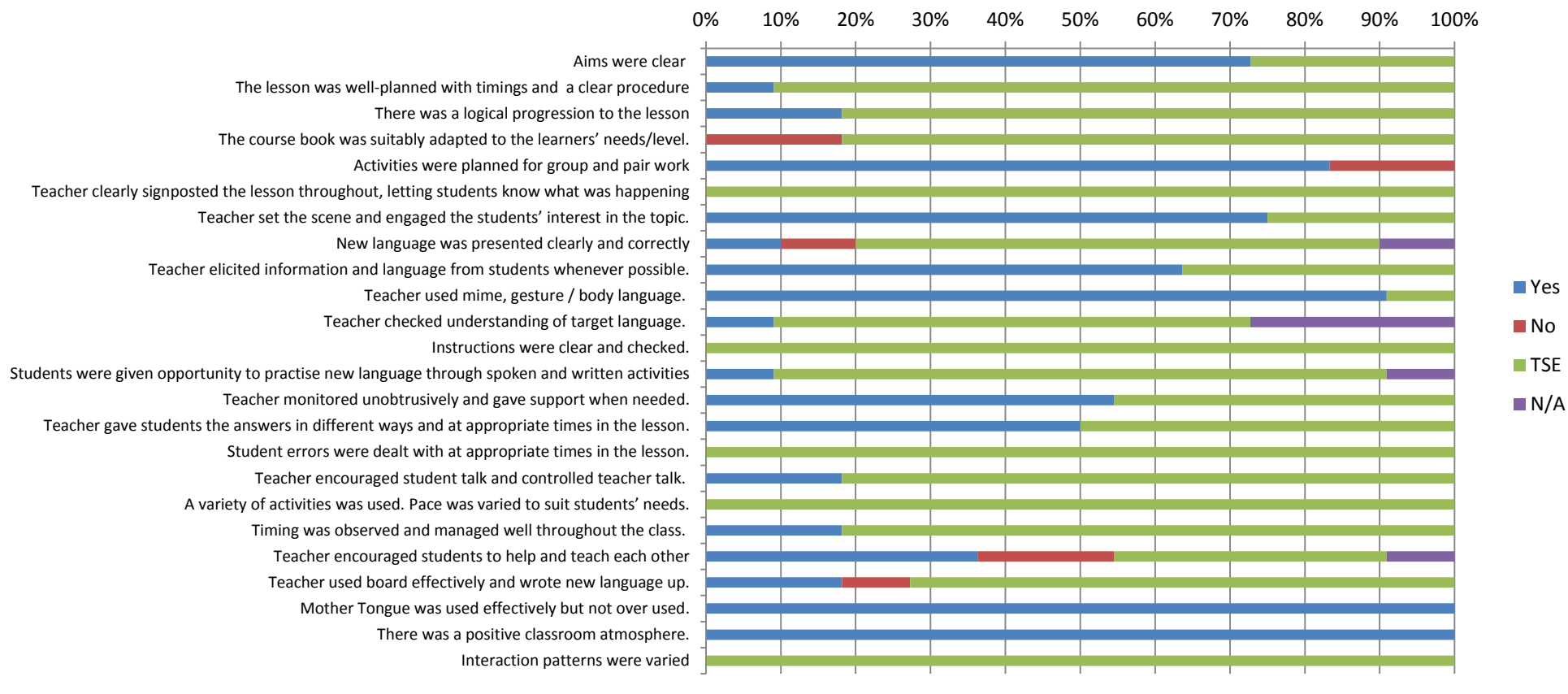
Chilaw, Pre-Course Observation



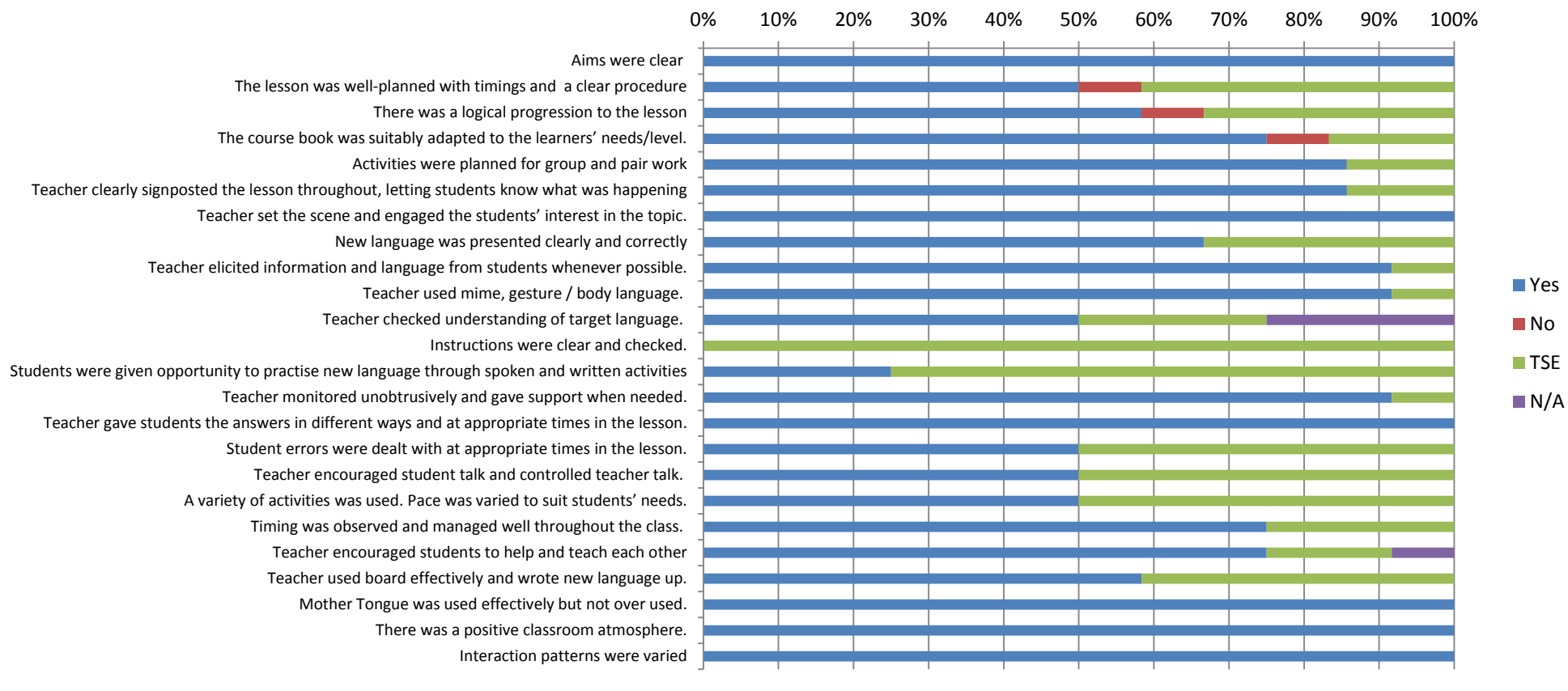
Chilaw, Post-Course Observation



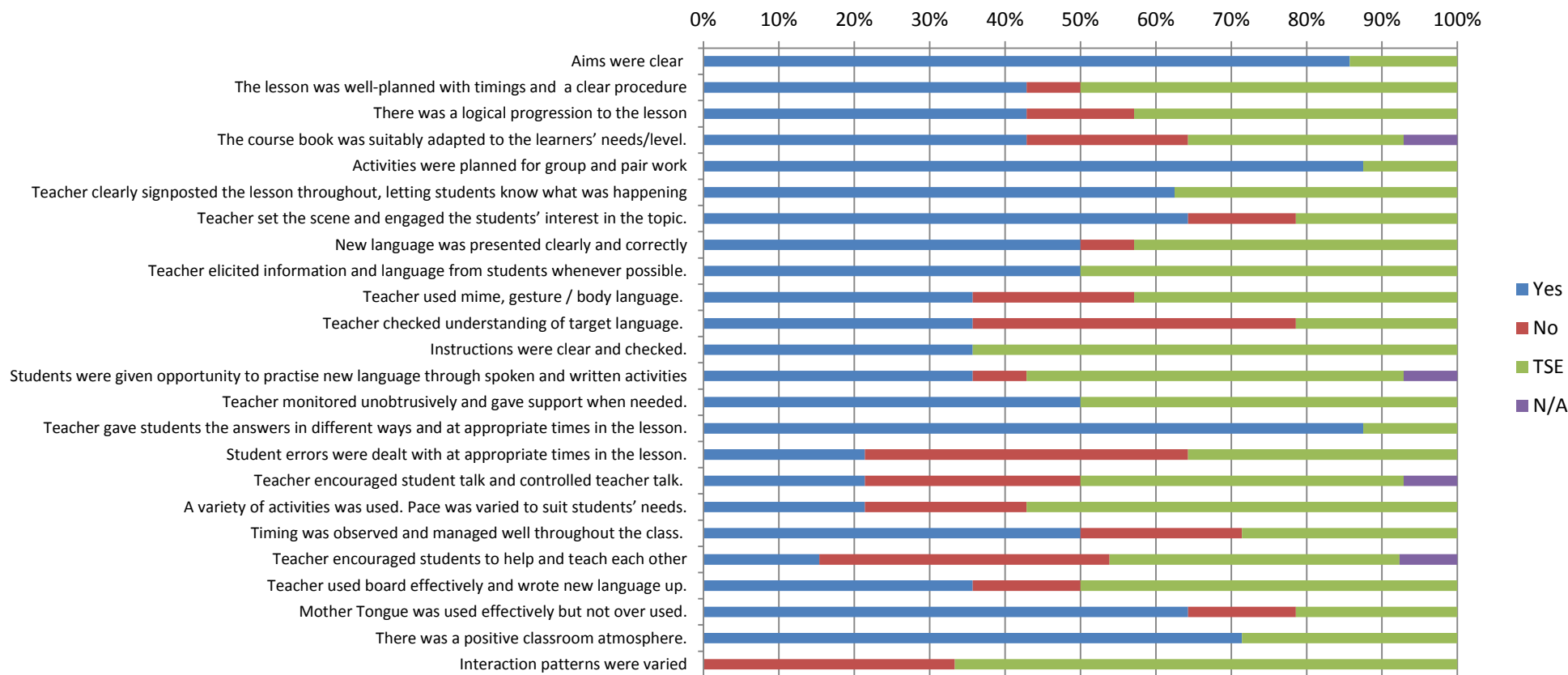
Kurunegala, Pre-Course Observation



Kurunegala, Post-Course Observation



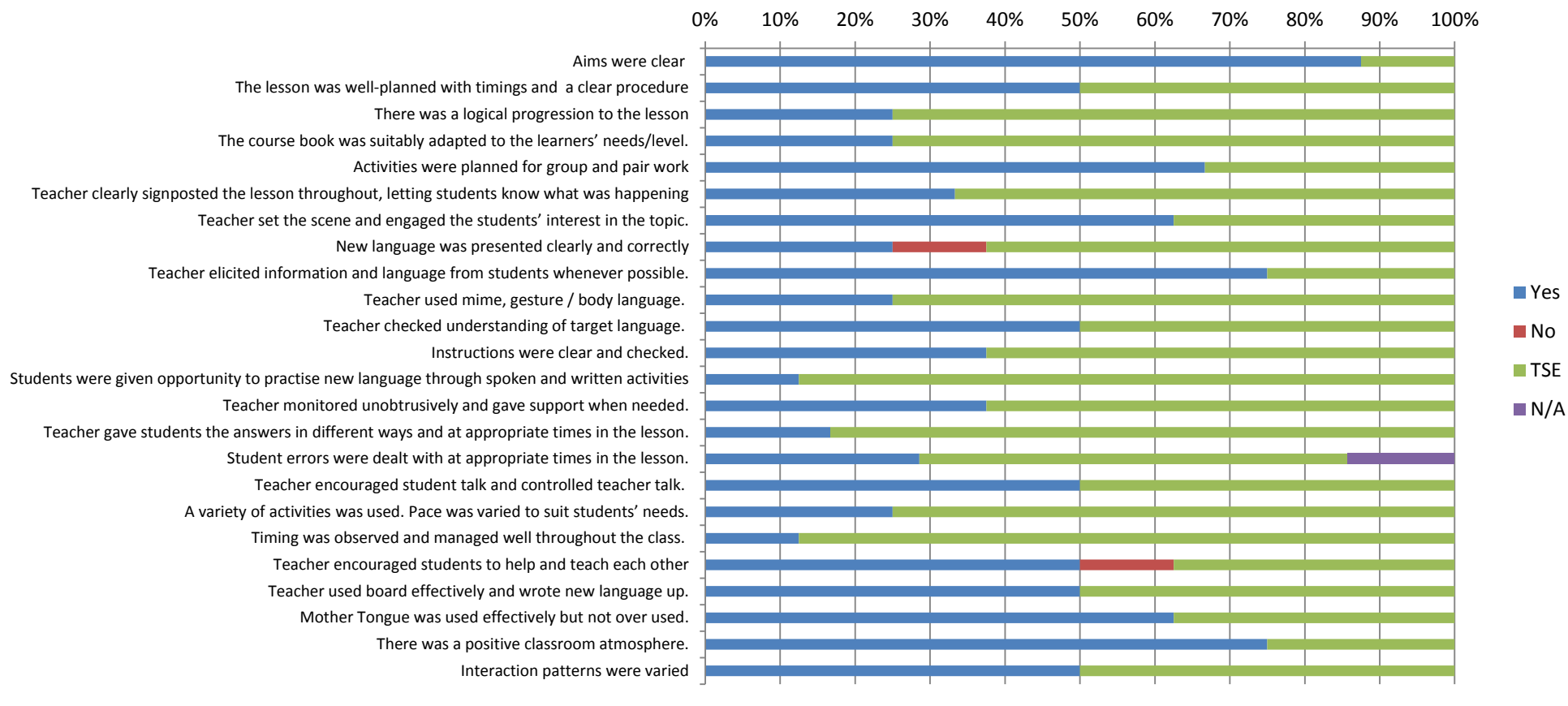
Polonnaruwa, Pre-Course Observation



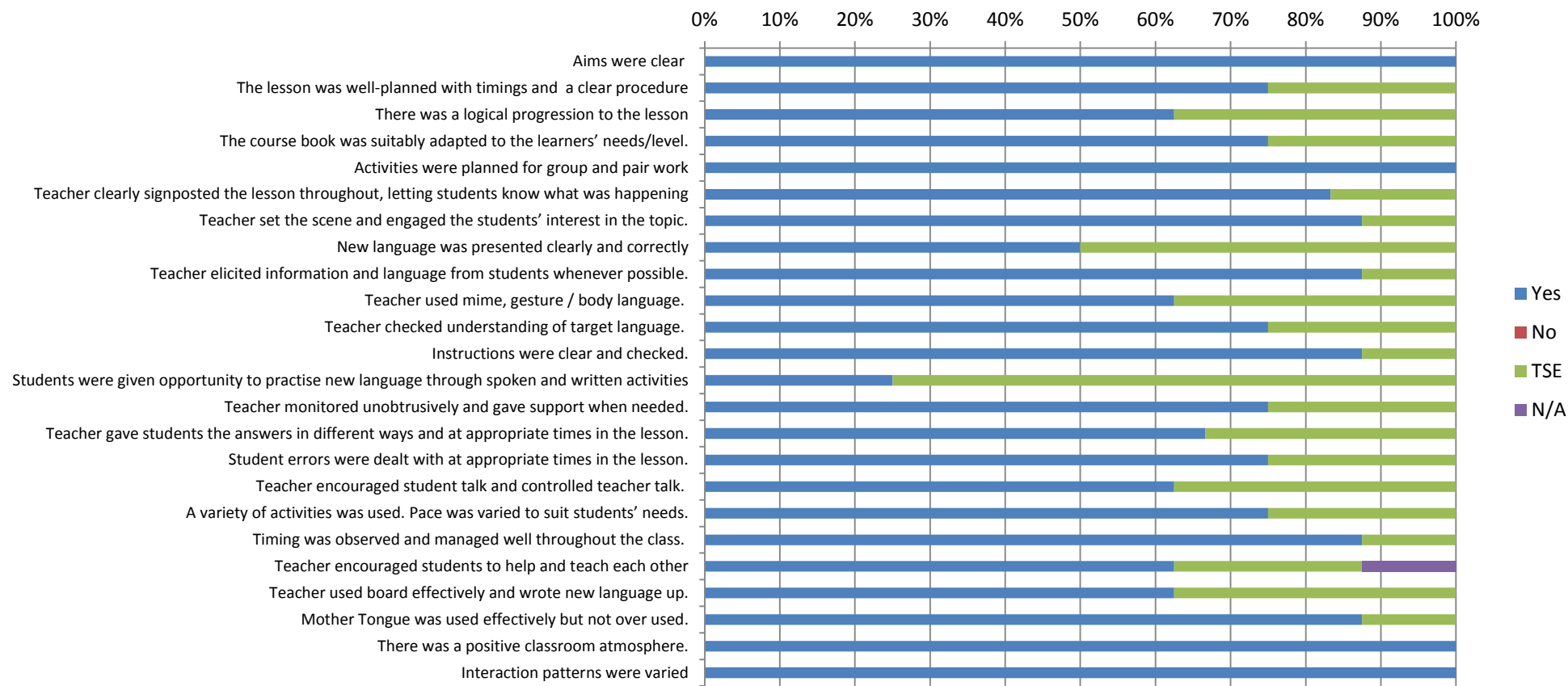
Polonnaruwa, Post-Course Observation



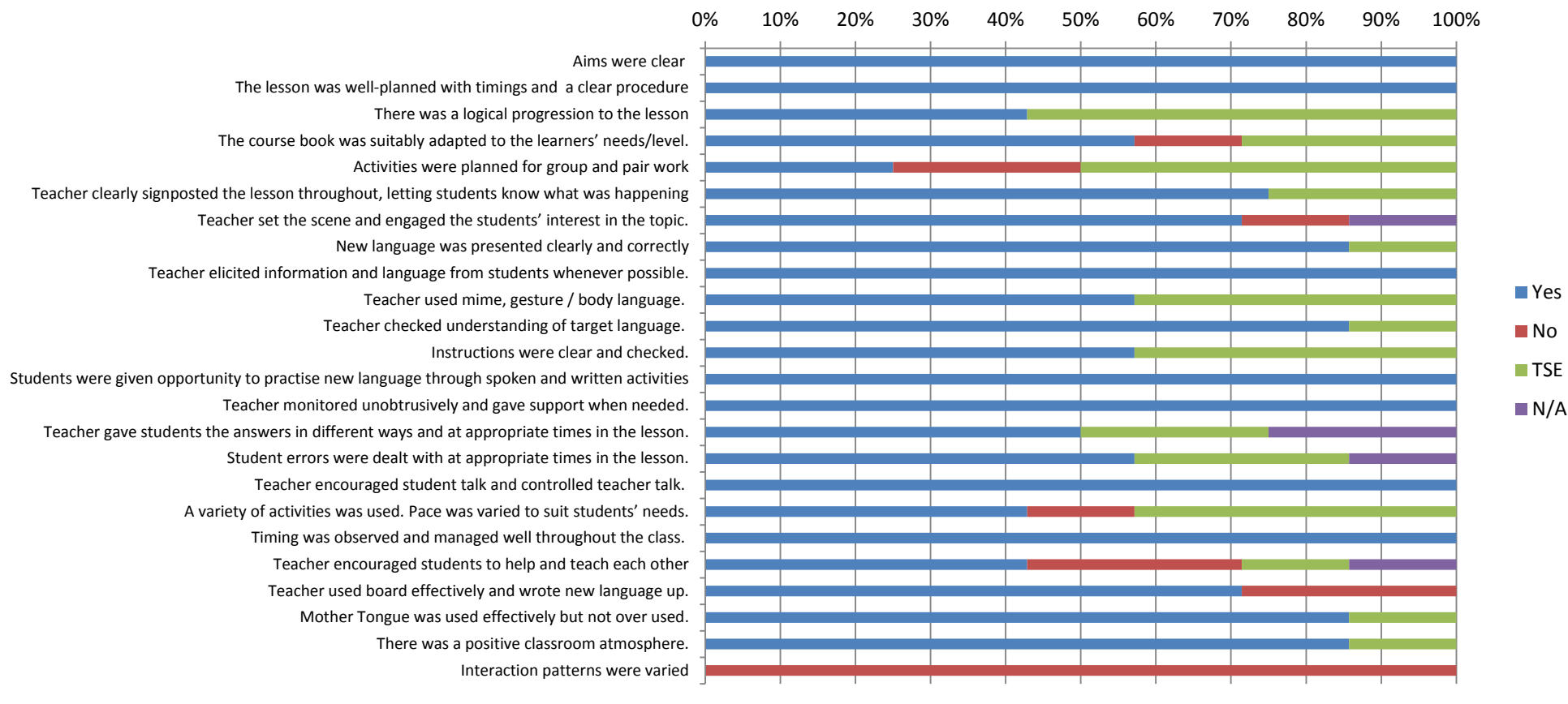
Moneragala, Pre-Course Observation



Moneragala, post-Course Observation



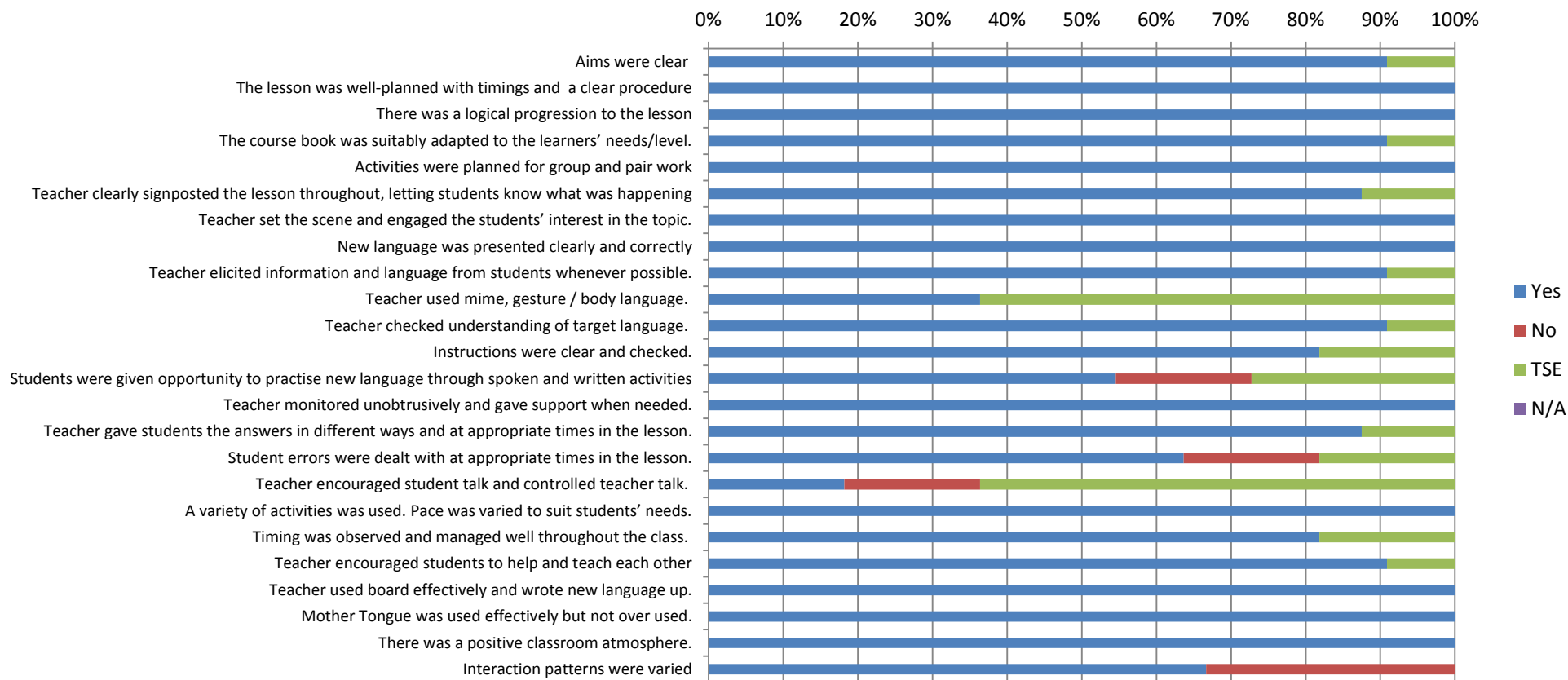
Anuradhapure, Pre-Course Observation



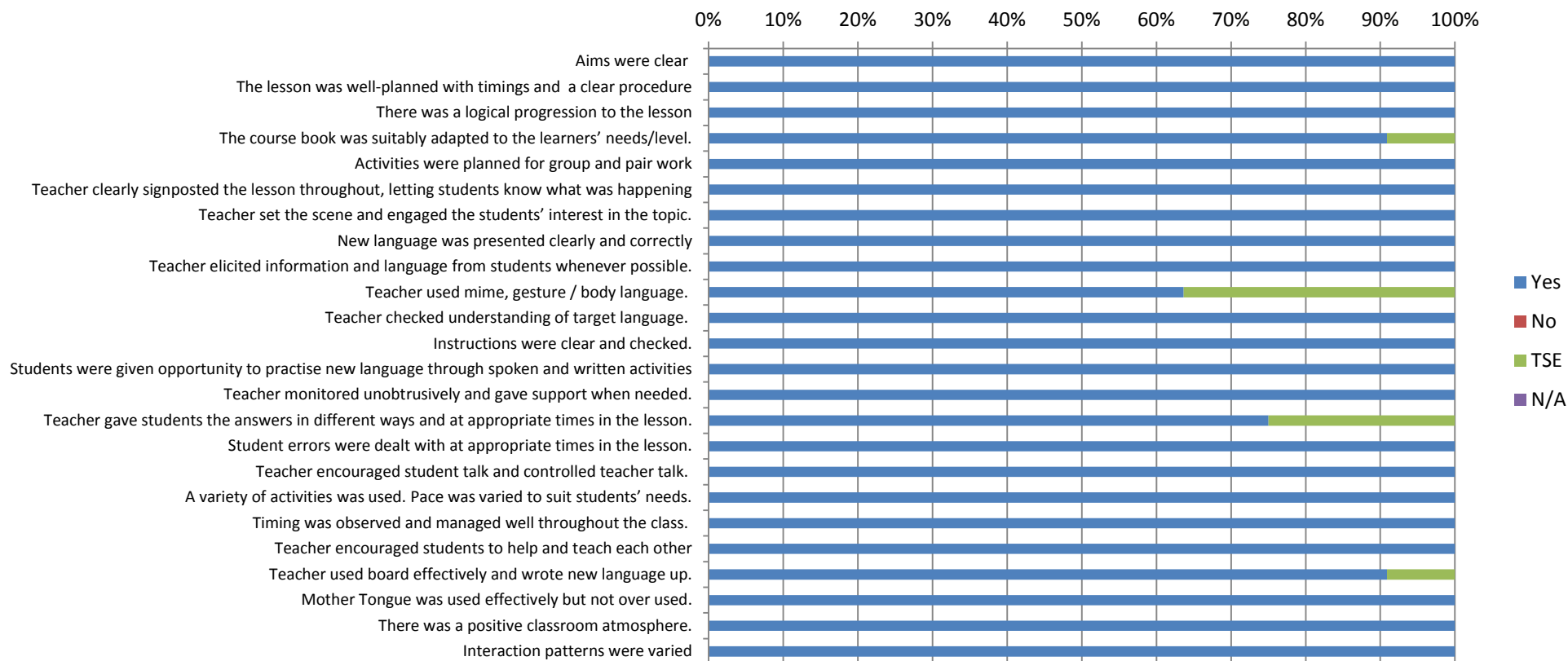
Anuradhapura, Post-Course Observation



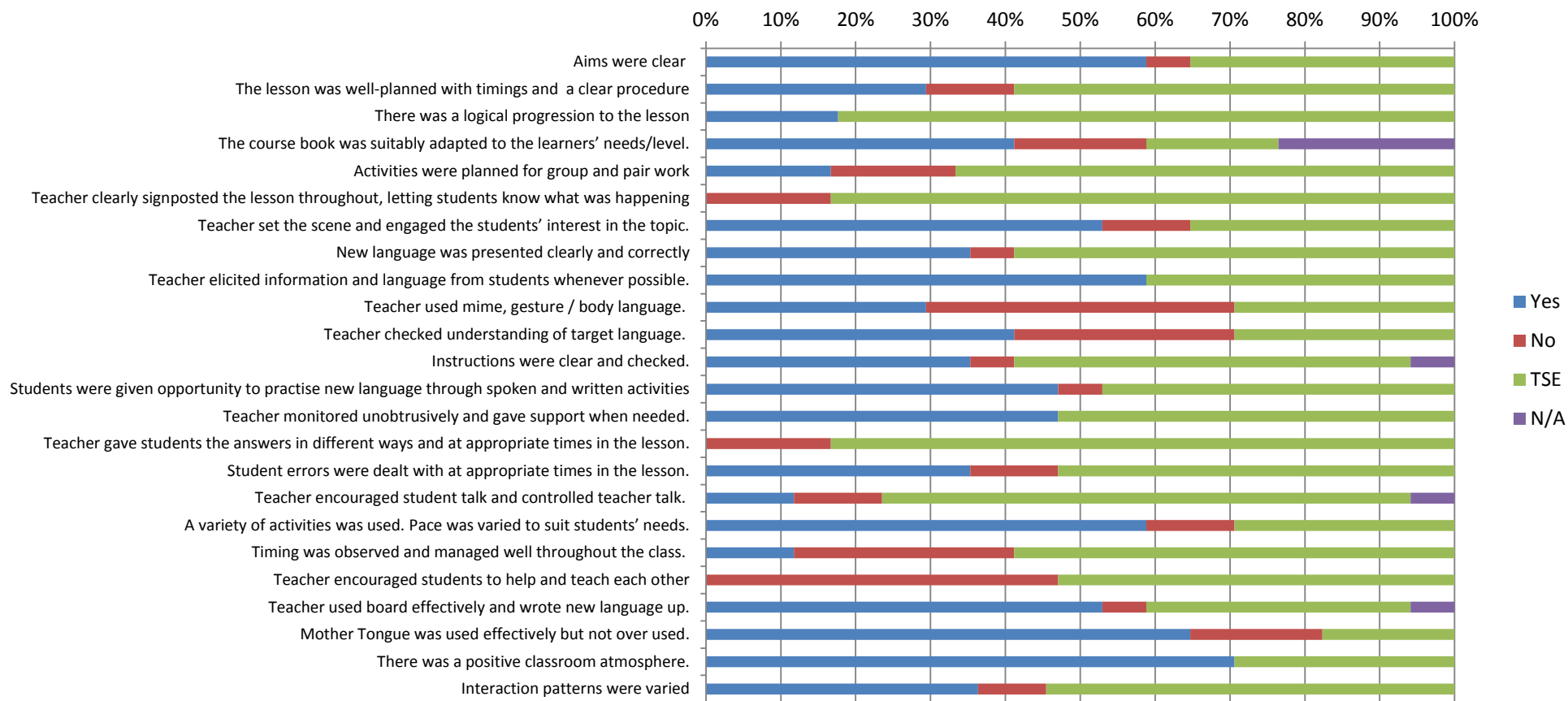
Hanguranketha; Pre-Course Observation



Hanguranketha, Post-Course Observation

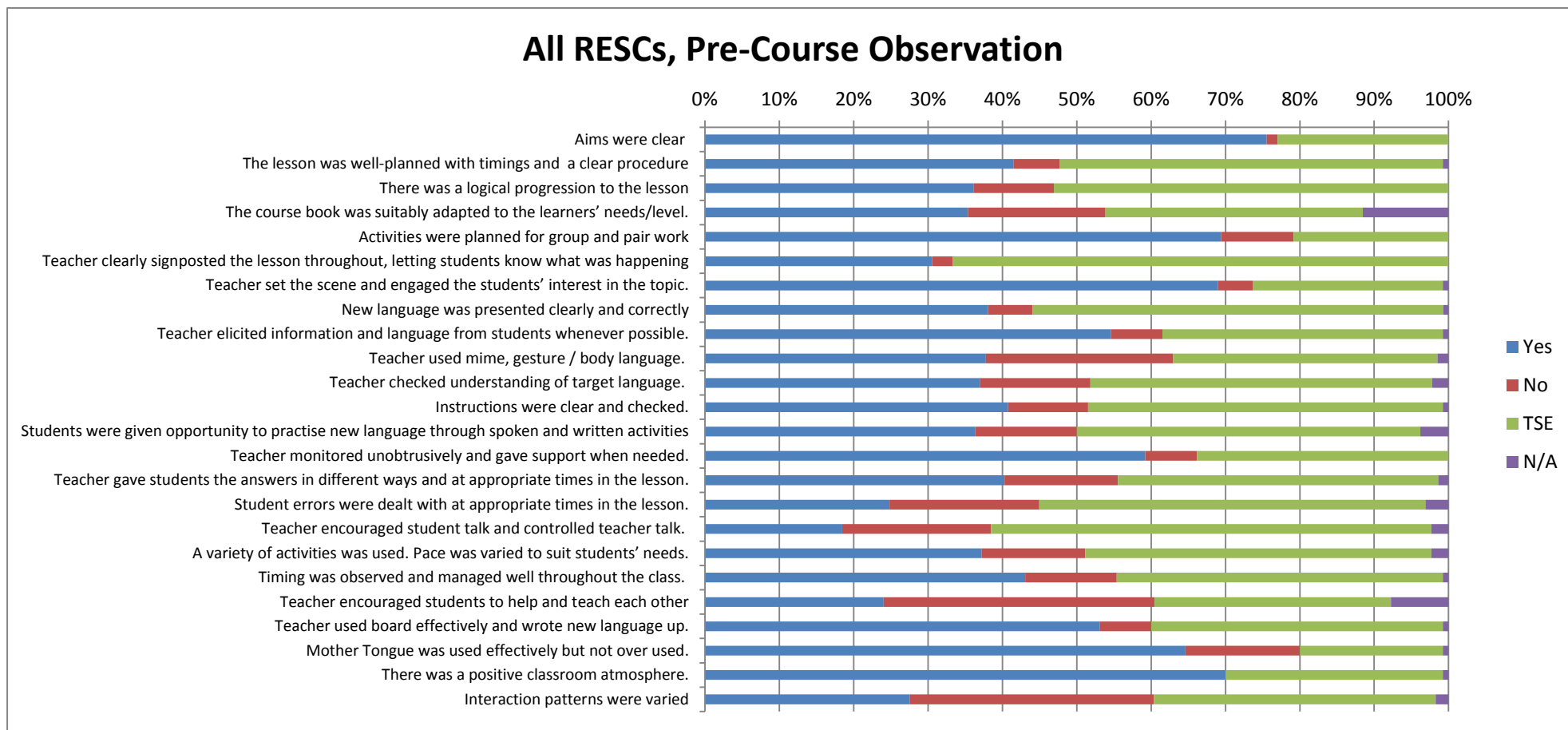


Misc RESCs, Pre-Course Observation

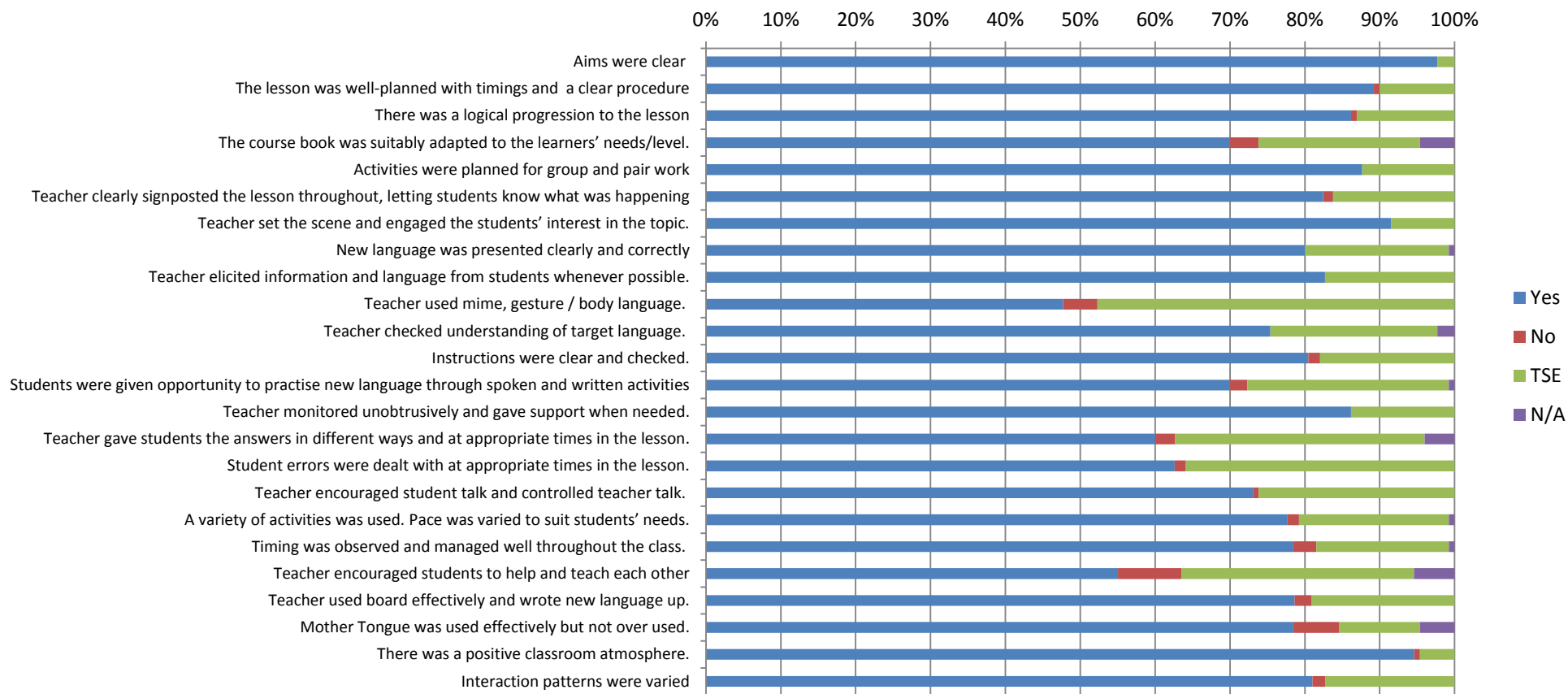


Misc RESCs, Post-Course Observation





All RESCs, Post-Course Observation



Appendix 4: Independent, blind observation tool

School:		Date:	
Grade:		Time:	
Teacher:		Number of Sts:	
Observer:		TKT?	

1. Activity

Tick next to the principal activity 5 min after the start of the lesson, and every 5 min thereafter.

Activity	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	# Ticks
Teacher talking/leading Q&A									
Students talking (pairs)									
Students talking (groups)									
Students reading									
Students writing									
Students listening/viewing									
Students doing an exercise									
Other (please note what)									

2. The lesson (1)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Frequently/Always
Lesson plan and materials					
Aims were clear					
The lesson was well-planned with timings and a clear procedure					
There was a logical progression to the lesson					
The course book was suitably adapted to the learners' needs/level.					
Activities were planned for group and pair work					
Teaching skills during the lesson					
Teacher clearly signposted the lesson throughout, letting students know what was happening					
Teacher set the scene and engaged the students' interest in the topic.					
New language was presented clearly and correctly					
Teacher elicited information and language from students whenever possible.					
Teacher used mime, gesture / body language.					
Teacher checked understanding of target language.					
Instructions were clear and checked.					
Students were given opportunity to practise new language through spoken and written activities					
Teacher monitored unobtrusively and gave support when needed.					
Teacher gave students the answers in different ways and at appropriate times in the lesson.					
Student errors were dealt with at appropriate times in the lesson.					
Teacher encouraged student talk and controlled teacher talk.					
A variety of activities was used. Pace was varied to suit students' needs.					
Timing was observed and managed well throughout the class.					
Teacher encouraged students to help and teach each other					
Teacher used board effectively and wrote new language up.					
Mother Tongue was used effectively but not over used.					

There was a positive classroom atmosphere.					
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3. Notes

Appendix 5: Focus group questions

1. Teachers who have not followed TKT

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What was your initial teacher training?
3. How much training have you had since that?
4. In what areas do you think you would most benefit from training now?
5. Are you interested in following TKT? Why/Why not?
6. Have other teachers in your school followed TKT? (Or other teachers you know?)
7. How do you think it has benefitted them?
8. Has their doing the course benefitted you in any way? E.g. have they helped you/cascaded training?
9. Finally, this is an evaluation. From what you've heard, how could the course be improved?

2. Teachers who recently completed TKT

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What was your initial teacher training?
3. How much training have you had since that, but before TKT?
4. Did you apply to follow TKT, or was it suggested to you?
5. How was the application process? Comfortable?
6. Why did you decide to follow the course?
7. What were your expectations before the course?
8. How easy/difficult was it to fit the TKT schedule into your lives?
9. In what way(s) did the TKT course exceed your expectations? What stands out?
10. And in what way(s) did it not meet your expectations?

11. How has the course benefitted you in the classroom?
12. Do you have evidence of how it has benefited your students?
13. Do you have evidence of how it has benefited your colleagues in the school?
14. Has completing the course had any impact on your career?
15. How do you plan to continue your professional development?
16. Finally, this is an evaluation. What suggestions do you have to improve the course, or for future support?

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for pre-2011 candidates

Please complete **only** if you completed the TKT course in 2011 or earlier.

1. In which year did you finish the TKT programme? _____
2. Which was your RESC when you did the programme? _____
3. If you have transferred since the course, which is your RESC now? _____
4. Approximately what percentage of the sessions did you attend? _____
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being 'very helpful', how would you rate the helpfulness of the mentors during your course? _____
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being 'all of the time', how successful were the mentors in delivering the training in a participatory, interactive way? _____
7. What areas of the course were the most helpful for you? Please mention a maximum of three points.

8. What areas of the course do you think could be improved? Please mention a maximum of three points, and make it clear how you think the improvements could be made.

9. How would you say your classroom teaching changed as a result of doing the course?

10. Has doing the course enhanced your career in any way? For example, has it helped you get a promotion, or led to any seniority or responsibility in your school?

Appendix 7: Selected quotes from TKT questionnaire

Matara

- It helped me to create a welcoming atmosphere in my classroom
- Planning of lessons changed drastically
- I think that there should be post learning programmes to help teachers to carry forward what they had learnt.
- ‘...a great opportunity to qualify without having to spend a lot of money’

Batti

- I see my students actively participating in the lesson when I give them simple instructions
- Of course! However, I haven’t been promoted so far, I have been recognized for my teaching. (gets given responsibilities)
- No, but it has given me some additional knowledge in teaching.
- I think it will be better if the amount of teachers is increased

Peradeniya

- Yes, I created an English activity room and all the other teachers ... have changed their teaching methods
- Yes, I have not only supported teachers from my school but also from other school[s].
- If you can give this chance to more [teachers] (over six from an area) it will be great.

Jaffna

- The module on pronunciation helped me to support other teachers in the workshops
- It would be better to conduct competitions among TKT teachers and make it as a continuous task. This will make the TKT teachers keep in touch with TKT materials.
- It would be better if you could introduce other advanced courses to update our knowledge
- We would like to do a degree course in ELT field
- [I] conducted workshops on lesson planning and preparing practice activities for the teachers. they participated in these workshops actively.
- Recognition should be given to the teachers who followed this course

Chilaw

- I am a pioneer learner of TKT and we didn’t have much support other than the TKT handbook and few activity sheets. But it is very nice to see since then this course has been developed a lot and today candidates get lot of knowledge and practice so I think they are far ahead of us once they finish this course.

Kurunegala

- It has improved the quality of teaching although I haven’t got any special responsibility.

Moneragala

- This programme was a great help for me to complete my degree, specially the methodology papers.

Anuradhapura

- I would like to thank those who gave me this opportunity to follow this course because it helps me to enhance my methods of teaching and I have learnt how to handle my lessons in a very effective way.

Hanguranketha

- The course changed my attitudes towards teaching as a facilitator for students. Now I help my students to learn rather than to teach.

Matale

- I've noticed that the students in my classes are paying more attention when engaging in the lessons, are more attentive in learning.
- I think I'm very lucky to follow a course like TKT. Here I convey my heartiest gratitude for British Council, CBB, all the personalities helped launch this programme and especially for mentors at RESC – Matale. If I have an opportunity I'm willing to follow such courses to develop my knowledge, skills and attitudes. I would be thankful to you if you can give such opportunities to enhance our career as well as to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes of our future generation.

Badulla

- I managed to make a stress-free environment in my classroom ... And I learnt to cope with unexpected situations in the process and by reviewing the lesson, to make amendments where necessary.