My teaching philosophy

> "There is nothing more fulfilling than intellectual effort. It is simply the best.
> And it is inherently useless. It is divine. No doubt."
>
> —Marju Lepajõe, 2015

Authentic learning, in my view, is based on intellectual effort, authentic engagement, and deep work. For it is the effort that turns talent into skill and skill into achievement (Duckworth, 2017) and "working for extended periods with full concentration on a single task" (Newport, 2016) that enables us to produce at peak level.

Teaching is both an art and a craft. On the one hand, instructing can be pretty subtle, unique, and intangible; on the other hand, it certainly requires mastery in planning lessons and giving efficient classes. Besides, just like a charismatic leader, a teacher is expected to model high moral and ethical standards, create enthusiasm, build confidence – and every so often – "take the road not taken" (Frost, 1916).

Undoubtedly, many language learners pick up their second languages by simply absorbing them, so initial success is easy to come. However, a journey to cognitive academic language proficiency is quite a different story. It can take years of hard work. Therefore, those happy about their long-term learning process will likely do far better than their reluctant counterparts.

I aim to build language learner autonomy because it leads to greater responsibility for learning outcomes. As well as that, those showing initiative in planning and completing their learning activities should not have any problems with demotivation, which is often the main reason for not reaching one's potential. (Little, 1991)

Intercultural awareness is another aspect of language learning that matters. So I pay great attention to my students' attitudes towards otherness, their own culture, and overcoming cultural differences.

I often mix different methods when deciding on syllabus, materials, and classroom procedures. For example, I may choose grammar-translation to work on sentence-level grammar and language accuracy, yet opt for 'teaching unplugged' to improve my students' fluency skills. Also, combining communicative language teaching with the lexical approach is not unknown to me because one can practice the target language in pairs or groups and work on linguistic features simultaneously.

However, content-based instruction (CBI) is my particular favourite because teaching language with film and content with language has helped me liven up the classes I teach in many ways. For example, I use film as a contextually rich source of authentic material and a trigger for productive skills and debate as a means towards better knowledge and confidence in public speaking.

To ensure my students experience "more learning happening more often" (Scrivener, 2015), I strive to plan my lessons and courses accordingly. For example, making things plain would work with those who prefer to be told rather than find out for themselves; finding out by themselves would enable my more independent students to enjoy more free practice.

Most modern coursebooks provide language learners with down-to-earth content, coherent structure, and clear guidelines, so they are especially suitable for self-study. However, I often spice them up in my classroom by turning grammar exercises into classroom debates and adding freer speaking or writing activities to listening tasks. Also, most reading and listening tasks can be easily adapted for vocabulary and grammar work, whereby some can even be transformed into mini-projects.

About technology, I favour a "principled approach" (Whittaker, 2014). That is why I gradually add technological changes, check that those online elements add real value to face-to-face details, and only then decide what technology can compensate or improve. Naturally, my students need support in (re)learning how to learn with ICT. For me, blended learning seems to be the key.

Relishing the challenge of initiating, researching, and creating, I see myself as a resourceful explorer in language education.

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