Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Contributions

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My philosophy of teaching has been influenced by many years of teaching experience in various contexts, and has been refined over the years by continuous collaboration with academic colleagues, with educators on the front lines in school classrooms and by my students. I reflect continually on my philosophy, and am influenced by my own school-based research, by research literature, by attending and presenting at conferences, and by professional development opportunities.

I believe strongly in guiding my students to practice critical reflection, and in encouraging them to collaborate together as pre-service teachers to reflect on their experiences and on their new learning in order to hone their own teaching approaches. I believe that it is my responsibility as a teacher-educator to be informed about the most recent research and pedagogical developments in my area, and to reflect critically on new developments, so that I can continuously refine my own pedagogical beliefs in order to present a coherent vision to my students. It is important to me to examine critically the pedagogical strategies that I teach to my students, never relying on the safe haven of what has worked in the past, but always considering how new ideas can transform my own pedagogical stance. I believe too that I must be flexible as an educator, in that I must always be cognizant of students' needs and feedback, and respond to that by adjusting my materials, my presentation strategies, and my own feedback to my students.

The foundations of my teaching philosophy are reflected in four pedagogical principles that guide my teaching in the classroom, and particularly as I work with both pre- and in-service teachers. These principles are:

(1) Linking theory and classroom practice
(2) Using inquiry as a tool for professional development
(3) Collaborative learning
(4) Promoting learning by the use of authentic tasks

For each principle, I have provided examples of classroom strategies to illustrate how they embody my philosophy of teaching and impact student learning.

(1) Linking Theory and Classroom Practice

In my course design and delivery, both for UPE and GPE courses, I endeavour to provide a strong experience for students by presenting recent research, and by linking such findings to classroom practice. With respect to language teaching pedagogy, two examples are noteworthy.

Because I work principally with pre-service language teachers in my Specialization courses for UPE, and with in-service language teachers and administrators in GPE courses, I focus strongly on recent research on the *counterbalanced approach* (Lyster, 2007), which is a series of strategies for linking content and language in immersion and bilingual language

classroom settings, with the ultimate purpose of ensuring that immersion and bilingual students have an authentic, usable language base. My doctoral research was based on Lyster's model, and I have since remained in contact with Dr. Lyster and colleagues through conference colloquia and presentations, with the purpose of further refining my understanding of how this strategy can be implemented most effectively in the classroom. For my Year 1 EDUC 460 French Specialization students, I present the theory, and encourage the students to examine this approach critically through the lens of their own experience as language students, and then explore with them how it can be implemented in their future classrooms. As part of their course assignments, students create lesson and activity plans that integrate this approach. Likewise, this research figures heavily into my course design for several of the GPE graduate-level courses, and still with the goal of linking it to practice, although at the graduate level, the focus is more on critical analysis of the theory.

I have been involved since 2012 in a collaborative research study conducted jointly by the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and the Language Research Centre (LRC) at the University of Calgary. This study examines the implementation of the Neurolinguistic Approach to second language teaching, specifically as it is applied in the Intensive French Approach, currently implemented in three Calgary schools. My role as a researcher since 2012 has been to examine the implementation of this approach by trained teachers, and to work closely with the CBE to imagine and extend the strategies to other French language programs. I have worked closely with classroom teachers and consultants at the CBE, and have presented at conferences, and participate annually as a facilitator in a week-long summer professional development seminar to train teachers in the approach. I have undertaken to involve my students in this summer program for the past three years, such that they have certification that they may add to their professional development portfolios. I integrate research about this approach into my course designs, specifically for EDUC 460 (first-year French Specialization), for EDUC 535 (second-year Spanish Specialization) and present the relevant theory in my graduate courses, again with the goal at that level of inviting the Master's students to reflect critically on the theory and on their practical experiences with this approach.

(2) Using Inquiry as a Tool for Professional Development

Two of the courses I have taught for UPE in particular have encouraged inquiry-based learning (EDUC 435 Language, Literacy and Culture and EDUC 455 Professional Development and Lifelong Learning). These were common courses for all first-year students, and both contained a working-group component, which afforded students the opportunity to explore questions of theory and practice by way of gathering resources and information from a variety of sources. Although I had not had experience with this strategy prior to teaching at the WSE, I embraced it with enthusiasm, and have since integrated inquiry into my course designs for EDUC 460 (Specialization I) and into the graduate-level courses I have taught. Ultimately, I see inquiry-based learning as an opportunity for students to tap into their prior experience, intuition, and understanding of the field in order to fully explore a pedagogical question. I view the experiences that I can provide in the classroom as an effective way to

prepare my pre-service Education students for the collaborative environment they will encounter when they join a school staff. I encourage them to engage their thinking across a wide range of experiences and knowledge.

I frequently request of students in my GPE EDER courses that they complete a final assignment such as the following, which was assigned in EDER 669.83 (Fall 2014):

For this assignment, you will work with a partner to prepare an informative website for bilingual educators to assist them in understanding the important issues surrounding bilingual education, the cognitive and social stakes for bilingual learners and to suggest pedagogical support and resources that they might access.

Most recently, in EDER 669.12 (Fall 2016), I required students to create a website, destined for colleagues with whom they are currently working in their language-teaching contexts. This assignment proposed the question of the effective integration of language and content in their teaching context. Students were asked to explain their theoretical justification (based upon the readings and class discussions during the course), and then to create a content-based lesson linked to their province's curriculum that would illustrate their conception of language-content integration. They were asked to propose a lesson plan and activities to illustrate the step-by-step implementation of their idea.

Whether in UPE, where I encourage students to view inquiry as a way to prepare for their future teaching jobs, or in GPE, where I ask students to tap into their developing arsenal of resources and the deeper insight they have gained from their graduate work, I have met with considerable success in implementing this strategy.

(3) Collaborative Learning

With a view to preparing my pre-service Education students for their future jobs, or for building off the experiences that my graduate students have had in collaborative work environments, I integrate collaborative learning opportunities into all of my courses. I am convinced that learning is optimized when learners can share and collaborate.

In common courses (of which I teach one or two sections per semester) such as EDUC 430 (Pragmatics), students are guided through their first experiences creating lesson plans and then teaching a lesson to peers. These activities are undertaken with partnerships designated at random by me, and so push students to find ways to collaborate effectively in order to accomplish the task at hand. In EDUC 455 (Professional Development and Lifelong Learning) and in EDUC 435 (Literacy, Language and Culture), I advise students on effective collaboration such that they can complete the tasks required by the course. Where there are difficulties, I try to use these situations as opportunities for self-reflection and learning, all with the goal of assisting students to develop their professional toolkit.

In courses of my own design such as EDUC 460 (Specialization I), EDUC 535 (Specialization II) and the graduate-level courses, I open doors for creative and productive collaboration, by requiring students to work together to create useful resources, drawing on their experience and understanding of the course readings and materials.

(4) Promoting Learning by the Use of Authentic Tasks

Being a teacher-educator has afforded me a unique opportunity to showcase authentic tasks in the classroom (and in the online classroom). I believe strongly that students learn best how to teach by teaching. In the context of second language teaching, this strategy is particularly applicable, as languages are best learned in authentic contexts. In order to model this strategy for my future language teachers, I deliver course material via authentic tasks, that is, tasks that my students can experience in the same way that their students will. A strong example of this strategy is in the use of the *dictogloss*. During this activity, the teacher reads a short paragraph in the target language at normal speed, and students are required to write down as much of the paragraph as they can. Students then work in pairs to re-create the paragraph. In the next stage, two pairs are grouped together, so that a group of four can share notes and discuss the language used in the original. Finally two groups of four can be joined to form a large group, again with the purpose of comparing notes to ultimately re-create the original. A whole-class discussion follows, which provides the opportunity for the teacher to address grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension questions. I do this activity with my language specialist classes, so that they can experience how it feels to be in their students' shoes.

To promote empathy and awareness of diverse student needs with my classes, I make sure to do several activities each semester that highlight the difficulties that young students might have (based on activities from experts in the field of differentiation and inclusion in the second language classroom). All of my students stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle, each one holding only a pen. I then read a story about "The Wright Family," which is a nonsense story that makes frequent use of the words "Wright," "right," and "left." For the first half of the story, students must pass the pen to their right when they hear a word sounding like the word "right" and to the left when they hear the word "left". For the second half of the story, students will pass to the left when they hear "right" or "Wright" and to the right when they hear "left." The result is usually chaotic and laughter-filled, but the lesson that course material may not be received as delivered by a teacher is communicated. Students have remarked that this is a memorable lesson in their semester, and one that reminds them of the importance of always thinking about the needs of their students.

These four principles form the foundation of my teaching philosophy, and my approach to my professional practice. I will show in the next section that these same precepts guide my professional work outside of the classroom as well.