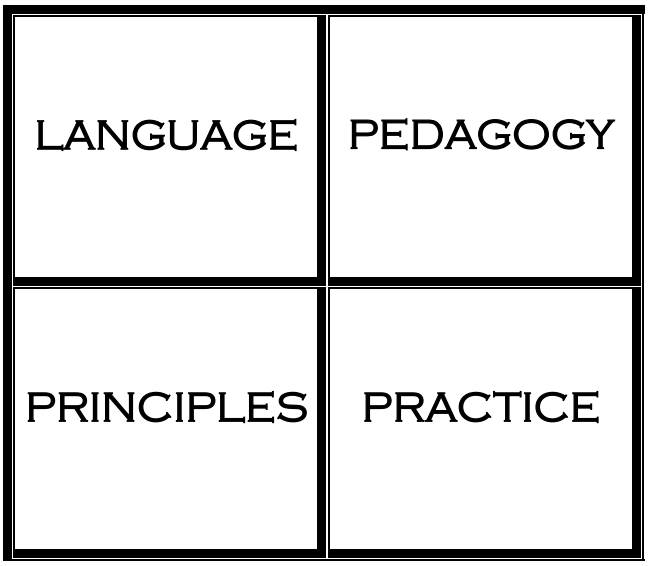

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THE BULLETIN OF RESEARCH, TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY
FROM THE SUSSEX CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, U.K.

Intercultural Education and Language Teaching: presenting a cross-disciplinary intercultural engagement toolkit.

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University populations these days comprise a majority of 'home students', and a minority of incoming students from all over the world together with the outgoing students that after a period of study abroad return to the home university. This student mobility contributes to a very diverse and multicultural university environment that presents many educational opportunities as well as challenges for teachers and students alike. In this environment, language teachers and academics in general are asking themselves if the education they are providing is fit for purpose, if it meets the students' needs in the contemporary world.

Research in the field of Intercultural Education indicates that our main aim as teachers is to help students become responsible citizens and well-equipped professionals to enable them to interact effectively locally, nationally and globally. In language teaching it means students acquiring not only a linguistic competence but also an (inter)cultural competence. Based on my experience and findings from the literature available, I argue that the education language teachers are providing is not enough to achieve that main aim. Among the various reasons, one stands out: the institution's constraints that oblige teachers to teach in a particular way.

Most universities are addressing the opportunities and challenges that student mobility brings to the university environment by making internationalisation part of their strategic plan. How internationalisation is understood and implemented varies across institutions. One of the most challenging aspects of 'internationalisation' or 'internationalism' is internationalising the formal curriculum. A task that must reconcile new ways of thinking and doing with the uncertainties of breaking away from some of the traditional ways of delivering education up till now.

It was with this in mind that a group of colleagues and myself at the University of Brighton worked in a project funded by the Advanced HE (former HEA) back in 2016 that resulted in a cross-disciplinary intercultural engagement toolkit, available on their website. This toolkit can serve, at least for the time being, two modest purposes: as a starting point for implementing an interculturalist approach to teaching, and as a way to influence the curriculum without radical changes which would require the support of the institution. A small team of lecturers from the Sussex Centre for Language Studies will be working collaboratively using this toolkit and exploring other ways of delivering both linguistic and (inter)cultural competences in language teaching.

Toolkit for Advance HE (former HEA):
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hea_brighton_2.pdf

Article:
Grimwood, M., Dunford, M., Teran, P., Muir, N. (2015). Promoting Intercultural Engagement: Developing a Toolkit for Staff and Students in Higher Education:
https://jpaap.napier.ac.uk/index.php/JPAAP/article/view/189/html

Teaching students with learning development needs

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Many students in the UK across the education sector, in primary, secondary and higher education, receive support if they have special educational needs (SENs) such as dyslexia, autism, or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)**.** However, students whose first language is not English (L2 speakers of English) often slip through the net in this regard. In my experience, this is often due to the lack of a medical diagnosis from a student's home country and that might be because there is a stigma attached to SENs in some countries or there may be a lack of awareness and/ or provision in this area. In most cases these students cannot be tested in the UK for a SEN, because tests generally must be carried out in a student's first language which means that very often students continue undiagnosed.

Another barrier to these students receiving support can also be a lack of expertise among support staff in dealing with L2 speakers of English. In my experience working at a secondary school, it was felt by many in the SEN team that they were not equipped to deal with L2 English speakers, even when students had been identified as having a SEN. This invariably meant it was left to myself and other language teachers to provide support to these students.

This poses several questions: How equipped are we as language teachers to support students with SENs and to what extent is it and should it be our responsibility? Should more awareness of SENs and techniques to teach students with special educational needs be taught on pre-service (e.g. Celta and Trinity Cert.) and in-service training programmes? Should there be a more proactive approach to identifying students with these needs? Who is qualified to do this?

Finally, since working on the Foundation Year Programme with home students, the majority of whom are native speakers of English, I have realised that this is not just a concern for L2 English speakers. In my last cohort, very few of my foundation students were formally identified as having a SEN, yet through my own observations and conversations with my students, I am very confident that many more have these needs. Part of the problem is that students have to self-declare to receive assistance and many do not do so for whatever reason, perhaps due to a perceived loss of face. I believe that it is very possible that several students are in the Foundation year because of difficulties they have had with their learning as a result of their SEN and I would like to be able to feel better equipped to support them more effectively in their higher education. One suggestion would be to have more training from experts in how do this, as well as how to identify those who may need support, if appropriate.

The Use of Technology in Language Teaching

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Being an expert in your subject knowledge field does not itself suffice to make you a good teacher. We draw on different skills to make us a good teacher. According to the TPACK framework, we understand how technological knowledge has been sophisticatedly incorporated with pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge to provide us with the new way in processing knowledge. I have teaching groups with various sizes, ranging from 14 students in one group to only 5 students in another. Each lesson I often focus on 5-6 points with 15 minutes segment each. Apart from the lesson plan, I use Padlet to organise my various in-class activities as I can easily upload the PowerPoint, the Google doc, along with YouTube video and other quizzes I create on Socorative, Kahoot, Todaysmeet all into one place.

The beauty of using technology not only brings a step change to the roles of teachers and learners, but also promote learner autonomy in a way that the students take responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, it opens up another new channel for assessment and feedback. Having learnt from my PGCert course which required to post individual 'mini literature review' on Padlet, I carried out the similar activity by asking all the students from Chinese intermediate class to write about their winter vacation on Padlet. Then in the following week, we had a peer review for each other's work. The students themselves are also the source for feedback.

Promoting Equality of Opportunity in the EAP/AD classroom

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A blogpost review of an article by Hill & Roed (2005):
'A survey of the ways universities cope with the needs of dyslexic foreign language learners and, in consultation with tutors and learner, the piloting of appropriate assessment methods.'

Summary

The report details a small-scale research project focusing on the needs of dyslexic foreign language learners (native speaking home students studying modern languages such as Spanish or French at the University of Sussex). Although this teaching context is different to an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) one, some of the conclusions and recommendations for good teaching and assessment practice that accommodate dyslexic students' needs seemed salient and transferable to an EAP and academic development context.

The report makes insightful reference to Crombie (1999; cited in Hill and Roed, 2005: 11), whose research indicates that teaching methods and approaches that can support dyslexic students can 'work for all'. Typical examples of this might be: the tutor's use of clear

instructions; varying tasks types; stating aims and outcomes of lessons; reading text layout; and text spacing when analysing texts for reading and writing purposes.

Application to Teaching Practice

Taking on this idea of inclusivity, I researched ways that I could adapt some of my teaching methods and materials to accommodate the needs of some dyslexic students in an Academic Development (AD) module I currently teach on. The AD module is compulsory for all foundation year students, of which the majority are native speakers. Many have taken the foundation year as they missed out on the A-level grades they needed for their original degree choice. Others on the course have elected the foundation programme as a way of discovering which particular degree they would like to undertake. The AD core module is 'bolt-on' in nature and focuses on the essay writing process and other relevant academic skills students need to develop for the purposes of undergraduate study.

Specifically, the course involves a degree of text and genre analysis to support students' writing and research purposes. During these particular classes, it was apparent that some of the dyslexic (and indeed non-dyslexic students) found tasks that required them to locate evidence and examples, the flow of an argument, and stylistic writing features in a text rather challenging. This often left them feeling exasperated and lagging behind other members of the group. Therefore, in order to accommodate these students, while keeping in mind Crombie's (2005) notion of what works for dyslexic students, works for all, I decided to develop some lessons using the 'text-mapping' technique, which helped students process and navigate somewhat lengthy texts for salient features.

Application to an EAP context?

I appreciate that these techniques have been recommended for students who are dyslexic and that diagnosing dyslexia in students whose first language is not English is rather problematic. This topic came up in the meeting I had with the dyslexia support tutor. We spoke about the challenges of effectively detecting/diagnosing dyslexia in non-native speaking students studying in English at Sussex. The tutor claimed that it can be rather challenging to determine if a non-native speaker of English has dyslexia based on the assessments and diagnostics employed by the educational psychologist. Even though not all of these assessments or diagnostics are based on reading and writing (some were related to movement and logic), it was still difficult to effectively diagnose some international students with dyslexia. Moreover, the cost of the assessment from the educational psychologist might deter students from taking this further. However, I can imagine that many of the international students we teach on EAP programmes may indeed suffer from undiagnosed conditions as well as finding texts difficult to navigate for their academic purposes. Therefore, with Crombie's idea still in mind ('what works best for dyslexic students, works for all'), perhaps there is no harm in trialling such text-mapping methods with our international students in an EAP class.

For a full version of this review, see the blog:
https://teaponlinereadingcircle.wordpress.com/

Formative versus summative assessments

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Having just finished teaching the spring/summer term there finally is some time to reflect on the year that lies behind us. Once again, a big part of allocated teaching time has been absorbed by summative assessments: preparing/revising for them, completing, marking, and providing feedback. All relevant tasks generally, but for quite a few years now I have felt that the teaching - assessing ratio is somewhat imbalanced. With a mere 36 actual teaching hours available per academic term, approximately 2 hours get lost due to in-class assessment, 2 hours for revision assessment 1B, 2 hours for revision assessment 2B, plus 2 hours for end of year exam; totalling 8 hours (a quarter of our teaching time). That is nearly three weeks in which we cannot introduce new material. The numbers go up, of course, with other languages that have even larger student groups.

Over the last few years, I feel, the quality of assessments has vastly improved. Realistic résumé writing and role-play job interviews create a great link between test and the target culture. However, without the stress of what can be seen as high stakes testing, these activities would be far more valuable. Personally, it is the comparison of performance to a subscribed standard or benchmark I have a problem with. We live in a world of multiplicity and diversity; language learning, perhaps, reflects that more than any other discipline. It is widely known that students come in all shapes and sizes and with various linguistic backgrounds. Ergo, each of them will progress in his or her own way. Summative assessments, in my view, try to summarise students whilst they are in the midst of their learning, somewhat pigeonholing them as a good, bad, or mediocre learner - often, before they have really had a chance to make their mark.

Additionally, we have all had students who have been diligent, reliable, and highly committed to their studies ending up with a low summative grade, merely because they crumble and panic and end up with a low grade that does not represent them realistically. On the other side of the coin we have student X, rarely seen in seminar, but with a highly developed short-time memory. This student will ace it, even though the knowledge gained through extreme cramming the night before is retained for a short period only. This, to me, is not a realistic representation of a student's skills and quite simply unfair.

Obviously, in practice we still need a mode of evaluating student learning and this is where formative assessments come into play. The monitoring of student learning is an ongoing - and therefore more realistic - process in formative assessments, during which the students receive constant feedback in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Time is saved for the introduction of new materials or consolidation of old ones, and since students can also provide feedback for each other in summative assessments, the teaching load is lowered. The argument about formative versus summative is not a new one, but it needs to be at the forefront of our thought if we want to see ourselves as *enablers* (Singh, 1999) in the language learning process of our students.

Reference:
Singh, B. (1999) ‘Formative assessment: which way now?’

Paper presented at the *British Educational Research Association Annual Conference*, University of Sussex, September 1999.

Language and Culture Seminars

Language, Literature and Independence: how an Emperor's literary salon laid the foundations of Brazilian identity in the 19th Century

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The 19th Century in Brazil was a period characterised by post-independence fever, cultural and political affirmation of Brazilian nationality and the project and definition of a national literature. The ideology of Brazilian Romanticism (1836-1870) played a pivotal role in the (re)creation of elements for a national identity in crisis with both Portuguese and European heritages.

Drawing on his PhD research on "The Figure of the Poet in Brazilian Romanticism", Rafael discussed the way in which Brazilian Romantic poets sought to (re)create a distinctive poetical programme amidst the general anti-lusitanic feeling in Brazil, the patriarchal figure of the Emperor Dom Pedro II, and a socio-intellectual context diverse from European models. For further details please contact him at the email address above.

Details of future *Language and Culture* talks are available on the SCLS website:
Sussex Centre for Language Studies: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/

SCLS Continuing Professional Development Dialogues Study Direct site:
https://studydirect.sussex.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=31960&rel=home

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