

Teaching experience

Since 2006, I have taught at different centers, specifically English Studies, International Business Communication and Cand Negot (a Business and Humanities education).

In the past, I have taught the following courses:

- English Grammar
- Philosophy of Science for the Humanities
- English oral proficiency
- Economic society in the USA
- Course concepts and research practice within the Humanities
- Culture and Identity
- Organizational communication: theory and practice
- Project presentations

Currently, I teach:

- Intercultural Communication (Fall semester, Cand negot, undergraduate level)
- Strategic Writing and Communication (Spring semester, International Business communication, graduate level)
- Professionalizing English: a discipline of ideas and methods for enhancing literate expertise (Fall Semester, English Studies, graduate level)

Advisement experience

I have advised both BA students and Masters students within many different fields and topics, from language description to discourse analysis within linguistics to topics within organizational communication and intercultural communication. My experience with advising students includes many different approaches, that is different theoretical frameworks as well as different analytical and qualitative methods, including Action research in the classroom for enhancing student language proficiency and fluency.

I am also currently advising a PhD candidate. The project is within Intercultural communication, with a focus on stereotyping.

Course and curriculum development

I have designed two electives for English Studies, which I have also taught:

Writing: a process of discovery, craft and activity of study (Fall 2010)

Language, sound and meaning: an introduction to phonetics and phonology for undergraduate students, with a high priority on student-centered learning) (Spring 2015)

In addition, I have designed an elective for Cand Negot, namely Consumer culture, aesthetics and identity (Fall 2006)

I have also developed Intercultural Communication for Cand negot. In 2010, the course was recognized as an example of best practice by LanQua (The Language Network for Quality Assurance) of the European Language Council.

Link: <https://portal.findresearcher.sdu.dk/da/prizes/example-of-best-practice-intercultural-communication-adding-cogni>

With an increasing focus on employability and lifelong learning, I designed the course Professionalizing English for the English Studies Center. The course is primarily based on the research of writing and reading comprehension by Marlene Scardamalia and Carl Bereiter (literate expertise) and especially Robert Scholes (textuality). Regarding the course, Robert Scholes, a former president of the Modern Language Association (MLA), had the following to say in an email correspondence (24 September 2011):

“Steven--I have taken a good look at the design for your course on professionalizing English and want to tell you that I like it very much--especially the section in which you explain the rationale for the course. I think you are exactly right about the need to extend the use of the language to social and scientific fields as well as the traditional literary and humanistic areas, in order to develop a textual expertise in English that will be useful in many fields of inquiry.

I congratulate you on this very timely move.”

As a graduate student at English Studies, I contributed to the development of a digital learning platform called VISL at SDU. Under the supervision of John Dienhart, the VISL coordinator, I worked on interactive tools and games, along with other graduate students, for learning English sentence analysis. In addition, I co-developed digital learning tools for the learning of Japanese sentence analysis with a Japanese teacher from Vordingborg Gymnasium for the Danish Ministry of Education.

Link: <https://visl.sdu.dk>

Administrative work

I have served on two Study Boards at SDU. From 2012 to 2016, I was a member of the Study Board for International Business Communication. I am currently a member of the study board for Cand Negot, which I have been since 2016.

Pedagogical Education

I received my first formal pedagogical training in 2001 from Odense Katedralskole, a Danish high school. My teaching credentials are in both practical (English and Art) and theoretical pedagogy as prescribed by the Danish Ministry of Education.

In 2010, I received my university teaching credentials through the Center for University Pedagogy, University of Southern Denmark. For the credentials, I worked on a project related to formative feedback.

Pedagogical practice: developing reflective judgment for teaching and learning

The purpose of my teaching and learning portfolio is to avoid being “trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions and expectations” (Larrivee 2000: 294). The trap can be constructed by the well-intentioned initiatives by others as well as a consequence of my own judgments and practices. Developing the practice of teaching and learning is similar to developing as an artist and scientist/scholar, a life-long affair! I see the function of the portfolio as similar to a learning journal, namely to help develop a meta-view of practice, for gaining knowledge and awareness of my own activities and the ability to actively appraise and regulate those activities (see McCrindle and Christensen 1995: 167.)

At the same time, it is essential that we keep in mind that despite our well-intentions, students might find our activities confusing and even humiliating even as we are trying to be supportive of their learning (see Larrivee 2000: 295).

Developing “reflective judgment and practice” for teaching and learning is much more than simply acquiring new pedagogical strategies, such as writing-to-learn activities, assigning group work or using digital technologies. Becoming a reflective professional, in any activity, involves a form of expertise whereby persons challenge themselves in regards to knowledge and competence. An essential core aspect of this development towards reflective professionalism involves facing deeply rooted personal attitudes towards human nature, human potential and human learning (Larrivee 2000: 296).

The stance I currently have towards teaching and learning is the role of the person’s emotions and perceived social reality. Thus for me, development and maintenance of knowledge and skill is more a question of “attitude” than “aptitude”. In addition, acquisition of knowledge and skill is dependent on prioritizing, practice, and persistence, especially opportunities for practice, instead of activities and practices guided by conveying more and more content of perceived “truths” into the minds of the learners. Patience is also key!

Larrivee describes three essential practices for becoming a reflective practitioner: 1) making time for solitary reflection, 2) becoming a perpetual problem-solver and 3) questioning the status quo.

On making time for solitary reflection (1), Larrivee (2000: 296) writes that solitary reflection should be an integral part of daily practice. This form of teacher reflection includes considering the impact and consequence the behavior of the teachers have on their students. Moreover, it involves consideration of the “inevitable uncertainties, dilemmas, and tradeoffs” involved in decisions affecting students. Larrivee (2000: 297) writes that teachers are not always aware of inappropriate responses to “students on the basis of culture, race, gender or social class.” In order to become more aware of one’s own behavior towards students, Larrivee (2000: 297) suggests keeping a reflective journal for “examining personal biases and prejudices that may unwittingly play out in interactions with students”.

I keep a journal for all my classes for reflecting on the texts we use as sources and the different pedagogical strategies used.

Regarding 2, Larrivee (2000: 297) suggests quite provocatively that “a teacher’s modus operandus should be solving problems not enforcing present standards of operation.” The classroom, he writes, should be a “laboratory of purposeful examination”. What this means is that “the same procedure as last time” does not count. A procedure or way of doing something should never be permanent. Teachers are called on to reevaluate and reconsider, as new insights, understandings and perspectives emerge. As problem-solvers in a laboratory, teachers engage in critical reflection to give their practice a sense of “vision and purpose as they continually forge new grounds”.

In order to realize this form of practice, I try to engage with my students on an individual level. I have found that including group and individual tutorials are a good way to review material covered so far and plan for future work, and importantly problem-solve on an individual level, given that class size can make “problem-solving in a laboratory” a real challenge.

For all three elements, it is important to recall some Stoic wisdom, called the trichotomy of control. During our critical reflection, we should distinguish between things we have complete control over, things we have no control over and things we have some but not complete control over. This is especially the case with the 3rd aspect of reflective practice.

In questioning the status quo (3), teachers may “seek their own truth and remain open to examining the assumptions that underlie classroom practice”. Some of these practices, the teacher does not have complete control of, sometimes none. It is essential to be aware that some of the institutional policies and teaching practices are “both culturally and politically embedded”. Challenging familiar routines and ways of doing and acting is an essential part of developing reflective judgment and practice, but it can be “risky”. It would be naïve to think that we live in a world in which “power”, such as material values and perceived social status, does not matter. Larrivee (2000: 298) suggests that in order to minimize the

risk, the reflective teacher should engage with “others in ways that are invitational rather than confrontational”.

As a teacher, I try to realize the value of being invitational by keeping an open dialogue with my students and by being quite open about why I do the things I do in the classroom and my assumptions for doing so.

Pedagogical aims

In my efforts for becoming a more competent and reflective teacher, I have a number of pedagogical aims. What I would like to develop further in my own practice and consider more is 1) my overall pedagogical learner-centered approaches, inspired by Vygotsky’s theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as well as 2) how enhance motivation for learning and in regards to being a teacher, 3) how to maintain and develop “freedom of method”.

1) Learner centered approaches

According to the cognitive psychologist Vygotsky, learning takes place when the level of performance and knowledge of the learner is at the center of pedagogical strategies. At the university, designing one’s pedagogical strategies based on the learner’s ZPD is a challenge, since we normally don’t know our students that well. This situation is especially the case in the classroom. However, when advising students individually on their written work, such as on their bachelor projects or masters thesis (‘speciale’), getting to know the learner’s ZPD is more accessible, since there is more interaction. Because I start with the students’ ZPD when thinking about how to enhance learning, I attempt to focus more on theories of learning from the learning sciences than on theories or activities relating to teaching from didactic pedagogies that focus more on the teacher’s activities. Critics say that didactic pedagogies with a focus on teaching activities create active students, but the students may actually be ‘re-active’. For instance, I try to avoid teacher-talk, which is when the teacher asks a question or assigns a task, then the students work to provide an answer and finally the teacher assesses. When enacting “active learning”, it is essential that we avoid teacher-talk. Ideally, “active learning” would begin with students asking or starting a task, which makes the teacher have to respond, and then the students assess, which would help their acquisition of critical reflection. When thinking about how to enhance learning, I would say that dialogical pedagogies that focus on learning and the students’ ZPD should be our aim, helping the students to be ‘pro-active’.

When thinking about learning, I try to take account of both cognitive aspects of the individual and affective aspects of the individual, as both support and can constrain the learning process. At the university, and basically in most educational institutions, I would argue that there is an over emphasis on cognitive skills and knowledge to the detriment of how the emotions determine learning outcomes. Noteworthy is that self-processes, such as self-motivation and self-regulation of emotions, is a better predictor of learning outcomes than intellect or knowledge. By emphasizing the role of the emotions, I am not suggesting that we perform as psychologists in our role as teachers, but that we may be informed by psychology in devising pedagogical strategies to help our students move forward. Taking account of a learner’s Zone of Proximal Development, both on a cognitive level and an affective level, is for me fundamental for enhancing a student’s learning.

2) Enhancing motivation

As I mentioned, I think that learning is more a question of attitude than aptitude. As the cognitive psychologist Carl Bereiter writes on acquiring the knowledge and skills for practicing “literate expertise”, we cannot neglect the role of the “executive function” for motivating and regulating thought and action for learning, as well as any other activity. At the University (and other educational institutions), we tend to focus on knowledge and skills. There is a cognitive bias in how we teach and how we expect our students to learn. In order to enhance learning, we should not neglect the powerful influence of the emotions on our thoughts and activities.

In the same way that we teach the “cognitive” for engaging with cultural, social and technological artifacts, as well as conceptual artifacts, we should be teaching the “affective”. The emotions are crucial if we are going to be successful in guiding our students to move forward with their own learning potential and for realizing their capabilities.

It is important to realize that the learning potential is not limited by what one knows or what one can do now. Learning is constrained in many ways by how we appraise and cope with the situations we find ourselves in. The appraisal and the coping of the new input emerge in the situation but also from emotional stances formed through past experience. So in the classroom we need to deal with different aspects of academic knowledge and skills and importantly how the emotions influence motivation.

Another pedagogical point for enhancing motivation and especially persistence, I am currently working with is proposing that we treat the classroom as a laboratory for exploring ideas and working on our craft rather than a display of our ideas and our abilities. When the workspace is viewed as a laboratory than we can learn just as much from our setbacks and failures as from our successes. Accordingly, I try to promote a mastery-oriented culture rather than a performance oriented culture (Neff et al. (2005). Mastery orientation contributes to intrinsic motivation.

When persons have a performance orientation towards activities, they are driven by the desire to enhance their sense of social worth or defend it. Their motivation is guided by extrinsic sources. Driven by a performance orientation, persons may indeed achieve success and status for their efforts. But in the face of setbacks and even failure, they might avoid

placing themselves in vulnerable situations. Thus, they might avoid situations, like in classroom settings, where feelings of uncertainty or anxiety might emerge. Furthermore, with a performance orientation, a person may feel an increased sense of worth through external social acceptance, yet if the performance is not acknowledged with positive social value, persons may feel disconnected from others.

In contrast, a mastery orientation is driven by the desire to develop new skills, master tasks and understand ideas, while its primary motivation source is curiosity and not status. With its external focus, performance orientation seeks to promote and protect self-esteem. Yet learning new knowledge and skills can be an ego-crushing experience, especially in the face of setbacks and the emergence of associated negative feelings. Instead of self-esteem, a mastery orientation embraces the psychological construct of self-compassion. Self-compassion views a person's own experience as part of the larger human experience rather than separate from it. Self-compassion extends kindness and understanding towards the Self, as well as Others, without harsh criticism and judgment. Therefore self-compassion may support efforts to be more persistent in the face of challenges and setbacks, which are a natural part of any learning experience.

3) Maintaining and developing freedom of method for teaching

Freedom of method is both a culturally and politically embedded maxim for university lecturers. But what does it mean? And what does it mean for our activities in relation to teaching and learning? Freedom of method is often referred to as a type of right, but I don't think we are using it to its full potential in regards to what we can get out of our teaching and what the students can gain in the form of their learning.

In thinking about how to enhance freedom of method as a teacher or university lecturer, Richards and Rodgers 1987 provide a type of benchmark for course and curriculum development, even though its main focus was on language courses specifically. Their work can provide a framework to think about when considering 1) approach, 2) design and 3) procedures. Below I try to convey the type of issues at stake when aiming to become more attentive to freedom of method, while meeting the needs of my students as individual learners.

Approach

When thinking about a course or the development of a curriculum, there are two essential aspects regarding "approach" to consider for maintaining and developing freedom of method. The first is, as a teacher or university lecturer, I have the freedom of approach, within certain institutional constraints, such as study board guidelines, to conceptualize the object of study based on my research activities. Naturally, for enhancing the students' critical reflection, I should also introduce other ways of conceptualizing the object of study.

The second aspect of approach is that teachers and university lecturers may select different pedagogical strategies that are informed by a particular theory of learning, which they view as most effective and appropriate for the given material and in relation to the students.

In practice, I aim to be explicit about both the theory being used to conceptualize what is being researched and the learning theory behind the activities inside and outside the classroom.

Even though I aim to be explicit regarding approach, there are always challenges. For instance, many students expect that I present course material supported by visual aids, such as Powerpoint slides. Yet I know based on the theory of the generative effect that we learn based by creating our own learning artifacts. So I try to tell the students that it would be best that they created the slides instead of me. Some students do indeed take on the challenge, but it seems that many students, most likely because of their beliefs about knowledge (i.e. personal epistemologies) feel that it is not really knowledge if they or their fellow students create the knowledge, expecting an authority to say what matters as knowledge or what is good or bad. In situations like these, I aim to meet the needs of all my students, no matter where they are in regards to their beliefs about knowledge and knowledge construction.

Design

Each of our courses have learning objectives that have been constructed by Study Board members working in collaboration with different faculty members with the relevant professional backgrounds. It is important to stress that enabling students to realize the learning objectives for a course, as well as general academic practice, is an outcome of design and not approach. When it comes to questions of design, we also have a degree of freedom of method. Even though most of our learning objectives have been directed to us by the EU and their European Qualifications Framework, so that we have objectives related to Knowledge, Skills and Abilities/Competence, how we are going to realize these objectives is still up to the individual teacher or university lecturer.

When thinking about the design for working towards learning objectives, we may implement activities that enable students to engage directly with the knowledge, skills and ability directly or through transfer. For instance, a course like English Written Proficiency realizes its objectives through transfer. It is expected that students will enhance their communicative competence in writing by mainly teaching students to conduct analysis of written sentences in English using grammatical constructs. My aim would be to teach Written proficiency directly, by offering more courses involving English composition.

Another design aspect for realizing learning objectives is thinking about a course syllabus. When designing a syllabus, I would like to think more about the different elements that go into designing a syllabus, such as “subject-matter” (what to learn and what to talk about), “performance-matter” (how to talk or how to analyze), principles of “selecting material and tasks” and importantly principles of “gradation/progression”. Noteworthy, most of my own syllabi are product oriented syllabi (determined in advance of teaching). I would like to work on designing “Process oriented syllabi, which would be determined by lesson protocols after teaching and learning activities for the semester. This would help students take more initiative and responsibility for their own learning. As a result, we would be helping students climb to higher levels of ability/competence for academic practice.

Central to designing a course or curriculum are the type of learning and teaching activities. When considering activities, I aim to be more attentive to the idea that learning objectives should influence the type of activities. Activities can be selected in relation to “information gaps” in the material for the course and/or for the purpose of “information transfer”. In order to realize education through research, I would like to select activities that relate more to “information gaps”.

When designing learning and teaching activities, I aim to consider more the different roles that learners and teachers, like myself, can take. Considering learner roles is essential for helping students move up a level on the category of ability/competence. Naturally, there are situations that require activities created by the teacher, so that learners are working with a teacher defined structure, but ideally learners should be planning their own learning and taking responsibility for it too.

In the same way that learners have different roles, teachers can also take on different roles. Ultimately, I feel that teachers are responsible for creating the content and conditions for learning. As Confucius says, there are no bad students, only bad teachers. But there are situations in which teachers should constrain their influence and responsibility. Otherwise, we may be robbing our students of the “gifts” that come from solving one’s own problems. When thinking about my role as a teacher, I aim to be more attentive to the different functions a teacher is expected to fulfill, such as traditional authority, counselor or model practitioner. I also plan to be more attentive to the degree of control I have over the learning situation, as well as the amount of responsibility for what is taught and for the type of interactional patterns between the students and me. These patterns can be either symmetrical or asymmetrical. I prefer symmetrical, but in many situations, students may actually expect asymmetrical patterns, whereby teachers and lecturers take on the role of the authority. Yet I would say that it is essential that learners and teachers co-construct learning and research through symmetrical interaction in the context of Education through Research.

Another aspect of design is the role that instructional materials play in the learning and teaching situation. The selection of material relates to different goals, such as constructing materials for presenting content, for practicing performance with the instructor, for discussion and for practicing without an instructor. When selecting materials, I aim to have these different goals in mind. The role of different materials is also dependent on the different forms, like whether the material is a textbook or research article. I find research articles the most fruitful to work with university students, but a textbook can provide a gentle overview of the research area.

Regarding the role of materials for the design of a course and curriculum, I would like to be more attentive to the ways that we can create more individualized learning systems. Selecting materials for more individualized systems may allow learners to progress at their own rates of learning, allow for different styles of learning, provide opportunities for independent study and use, and provide opportunities for self-evaluation and progress in learning. So my aim is to explore more ways in which we can individualize learning.

Finally, regarding materials, I think that we may be neglecting the value that writing has as a material for learning. In the context of Education through research, the introduction and use of theory and method for investigating a topic, issue or object of analysis gains priority and takes up more “space” within education. Rightly so. Yet an academic education is not necessarily an education for doing research. An academic education is generally for enhancing critical thinking within a field of study and communicative skills. Therefore, I aim to include writing as a material for course designs.

Procedure

The final category to think about as a teacher is procedure, that is the actual moment-to-moment techniques, practices and behaviors in teaching content and/or an activity. Here I also aim to maintain and develop freedom of method, because we have options when it comes to how we present, practice and provide feedback.

In regards to presentation, I aim to consider how I present new material, as well as elaborate and clarify through different activities and tasks, such as discussion, lectures, group work and other activities. For me, an essential procedure is providing opportunities for practice. Thus I aim to include time in the classroom and outside for analysis, writing, talk, interaction and other relevant activities as they may present themselves from student responses to my presentation. The last aspect of procedure is feedback. Sometimes I wonder why there is such a long space of time in academic work from presentation and practice to feedback, especially if we compare to non-cognitive activities like sports and music. In sports and music pedagogy, feedback is immediate and continuous. So I aim to seek opportunities to provide feedback when ever possible, especially formative feedback which occurs during the learning process. I also aim to provide response to student work more after summative feedback, like the final assessment in the form of grades. I aim to invite students to

visit me individually for how they can move forward with their learning.

I also think that there are many types of formative feedback available through digital technologies. In thinking about individual learning systems, digital technologies are an area of activity that could be used more.

Finally, Freedom of Method is very much influenced by our choices about how and what to teach, which can be organized around the categories of approach, design and procedure. These categories can help us qualify our freedom of method. Freedom of method, in my view, means that we are free to develop curriculum and instruction informed by these categories.

Yet we are not completely free. Naturally, there are many institutional constraints, such as study guides. Therefore, when designing curriculum and instruction for ourselves and, most importantly for our colleagues, we, as an institution of higher education, should be more aware of how different initiatives and policies effect practice, in the same way as our biases and prejudices may affect our students in the classroom. In my view, freedom of method is valuable part of why we teach and therefore when we design and develop new curriculum and courses we should pick our language carefully to ensure freedom of method.