

Let's Marry

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This plenary ponders the potential of pursuing partnerships with our peers in pedagogy and language acquisition.

We live in an era of interconnectedness in most aspects of our lives. Our era believes that groups can achieve things that individuals can't. We believe that data leads to information which, when integrated into existing mental schema, becomes knowledge. Thus the more data, the greater our knowledge. We believe that data emerges from research and thus the more research, the greater our knowledge. This knowledge creation in individuals' minds is the end product of their own participation in the wider world.

We learn by doing, through discovery, sometimes guided discovery, through participation and sharing. We read webpages, books and emails, and we listen to radio, television, podcasts and people. We assess the incoming information and hook it onto the old, and reshape our understanding of the world.

Our classrooms are carefully constructed learning environments in which teachers and students collaborate in knowledge creation. They develop through cyclic processes of analysis and synthesis. Students are engaged in achieving tasks with real world outcomes. They write letters, essays, poems, stories, posters, speeches, blogs, create wikis and participate in online communities.

Students create. Creation is the pinnacle of the revised Bloom's taxonomy, one of the most pervasive constructs in education today. In a one million word corpus of TALC texts, it is mentioned three times in two papers. The base of the Bloom pyramid, as it is usually depicted, is remembering pieces of information, which is relatively easy to assess. Creativity is not so easy to assess. In the modern classroom, we assess language holistically and collaboratively.

Language teachers know about language, they know their students, their learning styles, their motivations, their preferences, their limitations. Language teachers hear the call of many a drum: assessment, global issues, drama, ICT, learner autonomy, business, literature, cultural studies, collaborative learning. Journals and conferences encourage language teachers to use Wikipedia, Google images, Youtube, interactive whiteboards, Dogme, TPR, dictagloss, the visual arts, newspapers, songs. And travel to England.

Language teachers will join movements they can believe in. Evolution in teaching styles can only occur when innovation is presented credibly, by demonstration, can be implemented practically, and has solid underpinnings in both linguistics and language acquisition.

The world of second language acquisition involves research in interlanguage, learning styles, constructivism/constructionism, error analysis, memory, guided discovery, first language acquisition, motivation, interactionist vs. behaviourist learning, input, intake and output, input flood, focus on form, inductive-deductive procedures, affective factors, scaffolding, competence, aptitude and noticing. And fun.

It is my contention as an ELT teacher trainer who teaches courses in Language for Language Teachers, Language Acquisition and Practical Methodology, that the current level of interest in corpora exhibited by the language teaching community at large is unlikely to

grow until applied corpus linguists collaborate with researchers in language acquisition, practical methodology and resource writers. A likely benefit of such collaboration is some convergence in thinking, and the terminology that expresses attendant concepts.

The cross-fertilisation that is involved in interdisciplinary work not only creates knowledge among practitioners from all sides, but leads to the creation of a new entities.