

Conclusion

In sum, these are the things that I learned to be true and which were used to revolutionize my teaching experience:

1. A great disconnect often exists between what we as world language teachers know to be the value of language learning and our students' own goals for language study. (Chapter 1)
2. When language teachers respect the natural language acquisition sequence (listening to speaking to reading to writing), they render language study more than a mere academic pursuit. They open the door for their students to the possibility of meaningful cross-cultural relationships. (Chapter 2)
3. Premature exposure to the written language cultivates a destructive five-step thought process in the student's mind when he or she speaks the target language. It also encourages poor pronunciation through the student's inevitable application of the English phonics system to the word's pronunciation prior to the word's proper pronunciation becoming the norm in a student's thinking. (Chapters 4 and 5)
4. The most important year of language instruction is the first year. It is the year that can either make or break a student and, thus, the most accomplished language instructors are needed at that level, not at the advanced levels, as tends to be the assumption. (Chapter 7)
5. A first year language teacher's most important task is to train students to think in a 3-step process, as does a native speaker, as they speak the target language. (Chapter 7)
6. Meaning should initially be conveyed to students in a visual and auditory fashion, with no recourse to translation nor, of course, to the written word. (Chapter 2)
7. One of those visual means of conveying meaning is the use of representative gestures, which also aid in promoting retention and in serving as prompts. (Chapter 2 and 13)
8. Allowing the symbolization stage to take place, as a student learns new vocabulary, and cultivating linguistic reflexes are keys to facilitating fluency. (Chapters 5 and 6)

9. If we are sincere about intending for our students to approach oral fluency in our courses, we must objectively quantify and evaluate oral expression and participation and weight their impact on the student's grade in a way that reflects that priority. (Chapters 2, 11, 12 and 14)
10. A teacher with only modest language skills, but a clear understanding of how language is actually best learned, will be able to take his or her students much farther toward fluency than will the native speaker who hasn't given the issue of pedagogy much thought. (Chapter 7)
11. The exclusive use of the target language in class, no matter how inconvenient it may seem, is indispensable. It is not essential that students understand the teacher at all times. It is essential, however, that they hear the target language without fail. If the teacher is sufficiently creative and uninhibited in self-expression, comprehension will follow. (Chapter 8)
12. One cannot steer a car until it is moving. Students need to be encouraged and obliged to participate regularly in oral interaction in class. Only then can the instructor gradually begin the refinement of their speech. Initially, a teacher should be lavish with praise, prioritize substance over form, correct via modeling, and hold students accountable for oral participation. (Chapter 9)
13. Eventually, though there is a place for third person discussions, oral interaction will become the most animated and satisfying to the student if brought back to the point of first person sharing. To make that happen, teachers must set the example themselves when it comes to being vulnerable and self-revealing. (Chapter 9)
14. A classroom should be laid out in such a way as to facilitate oral expression by creating proximity, enabling student focus, maximizing time on task, allowing for small sub-groupings, and making use of technology to multiply sources of instruction and stimulus. (Chapter 10)
15. The use of kinesthetic representations of structure (KRS) helps students picture proper syntax without the need for analytical grammatical explanations and can serve as a prompt to correct their sentence structure without taking away from them the initiative of self-expression. (Chapter 13)
16. The acquisition of effective reading and writing skills depends on the solidity of the oral foundation that preceded them. If you first teach students to read and write, teaching and motivating them to speak will be "like pulling teeth". Teach them first to understand and speak and you'll find that reading and writing will flow naturally. (Chapter 8)

17. If student motivation lags, it is likely that one or more of the following pillars is missing to a language program: effective curriculum, relationship building with native speakers, first person sharing and the use of storytelling. (Chapter 15)

Finally, on a personal level, remembering the hopeless discouragement that drove me to resign twice from language teaching in my first five years after college, I have learned this truth as well from Psalm 37:

"The steps of a man are established by the LORD, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the LORD is the One who holds his hand."