

Reflection and Reaction: Writing, Instructional Sequencing and Task Design

Regarding the Writing portion from the Foreign Language Teaching Methods website, I appreciated how much the lesson made me reflect on how I should teach and think about teaching writing. I admired the Process approach to writing, with the Pre-Writing Activities, the During-Writing Activities, and the Post-Writing Activities, because it gives so much meaning to what could otherwise seem like a mundane, pointless task. For example, just telling all of the students to write down, say, a description of a certain place, or writing about a fictional character can just feel like a forced activity to grade, but this model shows students that they are learning many skills: not only grammatical capabilities in the TL, but learning how to be a better writer in general, practicing brainstorming, the act itself of writing, and being able to read over one's work afterwards to reflect upon it and improve it. This approach forces both the professor and the students to become much more aware, intentional, and thoughtful writers. I'll admit, I am still initially petrified when I start writing in French until I realize I have written so many essays in English, and the process I use then is just as relevant in French. I completely believe what we talked about in class- a good writer can be a good writer in any language- I just think it really takes reminding students that just because they are trying to write in a foreign language does not mean they have to start learning how to write from scratch.

Regarding grading, I appreciated Dr. Scott's advice to write corrections on a second sheet of paper. I do think that motivated students will get a lot more out of a written page of feedback, praise, and suggestions than coded red markings- although that may well be just personal preference. I also like the idea of facilitative comments and trying to understand the root of students writing with particular errors; for example, in the past, when I used to see a bunch of red markings, my brain would just shut down in discouragement, but when I was told

my partitive and agreement in French were severely lacking, I just focused on reading and practicing grammar focusing on those errors, and my grammar actually improved a bit. Specific error correction, I think, is much easier to forget, but knowing in the back of one's mind that gender is something one tends to get wrong, writing becomes more careful and intentional in that regard.

Finally, regarding Instructional Sequencing and Task Design, I have a feeling this will be a crucial chapter for me to return to once I begin actually teaching. Without any proper teaching experience under my belt, it was a little harder to visualize how I would apply this chapter to my own teaching. Nonetheless, I found it helpful. For example, I thought making the distinction between mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communicative drills to be very important; I think every advanced language student has (unpleasant?) memories of mechanical drills and memorizing verb conjugation tables. Seeing as it's easy enough to simply memorize grammar forms but it can be harder to use such forms correctly later, I am making a mental note to use more meaningful drills and communicative drills for two reasons. Firstly, those drills are more interesting and likelier to capture student attention, and secondly, the students will be more likely to retain what they learned if it was connected to meaning or communication rather than simply words with little context.