Teaching philosophy in practice: Developing compatibility through personal practical knowledge

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ABSTRACT
As part of an MATESOL mentoring program, developing educators were paired with experienced professors. The authors explore how personal practical knowledge bridges the gap between teaching philosophy and classroom practice. The complex layers of experience and knowledge that a mentor can offer need to be prompted, however; they cannot simply be deduced by observing. Using observational notes, interviews, and reflection, we explore real-time teaching decisions as a way to elaborate and reconsider the usually succinct teaching philosophy statement. This is particularly important for new teachers and those who are teaching in contexts or with students whose culture is still being absorbed. Personal practice knowledge is seen as the stem from which both teaching philosophy and classroom practice bloom.

Keywords: Classroom practice; personal practical knowledge; teaching philosophy; TESOL

INTRODUCTION

This article offers reflection based on observation of an experienced teacher (Laurel Black) by a beginning teacher (Kazuaki Kumagai). It focuses on Black's philosophy of teaching and analyzes how she achieved compatibility between her teaching philosophy and her teaching practice. The purpose of this article is to provide practical suggestions for teachers' professional development in terms of establishing a desirable relationship between teaching philosophy and classroom practice. It takes the unusual step of using the personal voices of the instructors because the classroom and learning IS personal, and the interactions and discussions between the two instructors, while illuminating for many, were one-to-one and lead to individual reflection.

Rabbidge (2017) notes that the messiness of interviews, of co-constructing knowledge, is limited in most academic articles because, practically, it adds too much length, but he also points out that traditional notions of publishing lead to "criticisms of personal disclosure" (p. 961). This creates a vacuum of knowledge that Payant (2017) explores as part of her research on teaching philosophy statements and the role they play for English language teachers. One of her research participants wrote: "I also encourage teachers to publish about their ways of knowing and journeys to becoming teachers. We need these collective narratives in our profession. They help us bond as teachers and grow as professionals" (p. 648). Breaking apart the apparent seamlessness of teaching is tough enough when teachers share the same culture and native language; it is far more difficult when they don't. Payant (2017) reminds readers that practice, teaching philosophies (and statements of those), and even reflection and learning are always in a cultural context and informed by those cultural contexts. The classroom is almost always a language-rich and culturally dependent context, and issues of teacher identity are foregrounded for both teachers and students through

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expectations, requests, reactions, responses, and explanations. Recently, how second language (L2) teacher identities are formed through these experiences as well as reflection and discussion outside of class has received a fair amount of attention (Cheung, Said, & Park, 2015).

This article grows from a project in an MATESOL program that paired up beginning teachers, particularly those for whom English is an L2, with experienced faculty. The conversations after observations or sharing of materials were often lengthy, wide-ranging, and exciting for both. In their freely-developed form, they demonstrate an "active, meaning-making" purpose instead of a way of simply extracting information or "eliciting data for the presentation of objective or subjective truths" (Rabbidge, 2017, p. 961). Thus the format and tone of this article is more circular, more reflexive, less assertive and certainly less objective.

Kaz begins the conversation.

Characteristics of who a teacher is in a classroom are the fundamental components that construct and develop the relationship between the teacher and the students. As a novice teacher who has been trying to project the self into teaching, I constantly reflected on who I am for my students, and I struggled to establish a desired relationship with the students. However, when looking at more experienced teachers, it seems that the notion of who teachers are dissolves in their teaching and becomes almost indistinguishable.

Stephen Gordon, an experienced high school teacher in a study conducted by Nieto, Gordon, and Yearwood (2002), articulated his inclusion of who he is into his teaching: "*I teach who I am. What I value and believe arises from my personal background and experience*" [italics in original] (p. 348). His explanation, grounded on his considerable amount of teaching experience, demonstrated the marriage of his personal sense of who he is to his teaching practice. The compatible relationship between the two implies and shapes his teaching philosophy. In fact, a teacher's teaching philosophy reflects his/her experiences, beliefs and values that influence his/her actions in teaching (Jenkins, 2011). As far as I recognize, however, not many studies about philosophy of teaching have been conducted in the practical teaching field. Jenkins pointed out the lack of research on how the instructor's teaching philosophy and the teaching practice relate to each other.

Laurel adds:

My first teaching philosophy statement was carefully constructed, included citations and references to theorists and theories, and, from my current perspective, was a generally rigid and lifeless document. I like to think that I was always more personable, relaxed, and comfortable in the classroom than a reader of only the teaching philosophy statement would be led to believe. But, honestly, I can't say for sure. There were no observers, just participants: me and my students. My

most recent teaching philosophy statement (Appendix A) is almost breezy in tone. It makes so little reference to any disciplinary literature or noted theorists that it implies I am so fully integrated into my academic community that I do not need to "prove it" to readers (Supasiraprapa & De Costa, 2017). I wrote it in a workshop as part of professional development. However, it was not "used" (see Payant, 2017, for many of the ways TPSs are employed) until Kaz began to observe me and asked me to begin making connections with and for him.

Brief review of relevant literature

The philosophy of teaching is the fundamental component in teaching that directly or indirectly influences the teacher's actions in the classroom. Jenkins (2011) demonstrated that the relationship between the teaching philosophy and the teaching practices is multidimensional: the two can be indistinguishable, mutually informing or rather incompatible. Such a complex relationship suggests the existence of mediums between the two that causes the relation to be diverse.

This article focuses on teachers' personal practical knowledge as a medium between the teachers' philosophy of teaching and their teaching practices and analyzes how teachers can establish a desired relationship between the two. Personal practical knowledge is a type of situational knowledge (Clandinin, 1989, p. 122) that involves all ways of experiencing the world, such as sensory, physical and psychological interactions (Johnson, 1989; p. 362-363). It is a significant element in teaching in that it involves not simply teachers' past and present experiences, but it also shapes their actions in the future (Jenkins, 2011; Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2012). The difference between teaching philosophy and personal practical knowledge is that a teaching philosophy is a set of fundamental core beliefs for teaching that are shaped from an accumulation of personal experiences and which shape as well the interpretations of the teacher's experiences, while the personal practical knowledge is a more specific set of knowledge and skills that have a direct and immediately applied relationship with the specific teaching practices (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Golombek, 1998; Sun, 2012; Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). In other words, personal practical knowledge reflects the teachers' teaching practices and influences the construction of his/her beliefs, and, in the end, the teaching philosophy. In this respect, this article considers personal practical knowledge as a medium between the teachers' teaching philosophy and their teaching practice.

An actual teaching philosophy statement (TPS) is typically a very short genre (Crooks, 2015). It boils down the instructor's beliefs and places them into a context that is usually easily recognized by readers. When Payant (2017) looked at in-service ESL teachers' teaching philosophy statements, she found that while 90% discussed their personal beliefs in regard to

teaching and learning language, only 56% included specific examples of their teaching practice. The gap between is where personal practice knowledge falls.

Tsang's (2004) empirical study on student teachers' personal practical knowledge and classroom practice provided a practical insight on the relationship among teaching philosophy, personal practical knowledge and teaching practice. She examined student teachers' interactive decisions in their classes as markers for their teaching practices. The study showed the novice teachers' struggle over adjusting their personal practical knowledge to the diverse classroom practices, as well as the mismatch between their teaching philosophy and their teaching practices. The results implied that there is a need for novice teachers to develop compatibility among the teaching philosophy, the personal practical knowledge and the teaching practices.

This article builds on Tsang's study as a model to examine the connection between the teaching philosophy and teaching practices of an instructor. In order to elicit insights for teachers' professional development, Kaz observed a course instructed by an experienced teacher over a period of time, interviewed her, and analyzed how she developed the compatibility between her teaching philosophies and the teaching practices. The marriage of her teaching philosophy and her teaching practices provided some practical implications for teachers' further professional development. Her thoughts here, beyond the boundaries of the interview and the classroom itself, offer additional implications and advice.

Context of the class
The observations of teaching were held in a first-year composition course at a middle-sized university in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The stated common course objectives for this required, multi-section course are as follows:

1. use writing processes to generate, develop, share, revise, proofread, and edit major writing projects.
2. produce writing that show structure, purpose, significant content, and audience awareness.
3. produce a variety of writing genres.
4. understand and integrate others' texts into their own writing.
5. reflect on their own writing process and rhetorical effectiveness. (Liberal Studies English, 2018; p. 2-3)

While the course focused on non-fiction personal prose, the individual instructors have wide freedom in designing lessons to accomplish those objectives. In this particular section, lessons were designed to support students as they wrote memoirs. The supporting idea for writing personal stories was that our stories are the forms of reality that entail lessons, thus they are the seeds for the possible futures. By providing the opportunities for the students to reflect on their past, write about it and share it with other classmates, the

course helps them to know more and express more about themselves, and learn more from their own experiences as well as from the stories of their classmates'. The main objectives of this course section, designed to support the over-arching course goals, are to improve skills of (a) generating and evaluating ideas, (b) asking critical and provocative questions, (c) understanding the structure of personal stories, (d) offering constructive, positive, and helpful feedback, and (e) metacognitive thinking and interpersonal leadership.

The students were all American first-year Fine Arts students, and twelve out of sixteen were female. Kai observed the class three times with intervals of three weeks on average. He took field notes in each observation, with three aspects of focus: observation, inference and opinion, which were explained and suggested by Bailey (2010) for an efficient observation. After the observations, two pedagogical incidents were picked up for further analysis. Laurel and Kai talked about her teaching philosophy, and their conversation, as well as her reflective comments on the two specified pedagogical incidents, were also considered for the analysis.

Snapshot 1: "Getting a student involved is a positive way of dealing with the situation, as opposed to continuing to punish him with his behavior." (From Laurel's reflective comments.)
Kaz's Observation:
The first pedagogical incident involves the teacher's improvised practical decisions on interactions with the students. On one of the observation days, a student came late to the class without any preparation. When the student came in, the teacher was explaining a classroom activity. She recognized the student, but she continued her explanation while he found a seat without any eye contact or greeting to the class. When the teacher introduced a paired work activity using the previously assigned writing task, it became obvious that he did not have his own piece of writing. However, instead of directly instructing him what to do, the teacher instructed the whole class that if there were people who had more than one copy of their writing, they could share one with those who did not have theirs. She conveyed that instruction in the same mild tone of voice as she had when she was providing explanations for the task. After her indirect instruction, one student approached the late and unprepared student to share her extra copy of writing. After the activity started, the student interacted with his partner as actively as other students. During the task, the teacher visited each pair, asking if they have any questions. She treated the pair with the student in the same way as she did to the other pairs.

DISCUSSION OF LESSONS LEARNED
The first incident indicated one piece of Laurel's personal practical knowledge: even when a student has not done what he/she was supposed to do, it is important

to get him/her involved in the class equally to the other students. She reflected on the incident:

> I see no reason to divert my attention from students who are on time and working hard to the students who is not doing so. It's also possible [, however,] that a late and unprepared student has a good reason – a medical emergency, for example. So, I don't want to publicly humiliate or interrogate the student. ... Getting a student involved is a positive way of dealing with the situation, as opposed to continuing to punish him for his behavior.

Her comment on the incident demonstrated her equal treatment for the students by accepting the possibilities of them not doing what they are supposed to do. The personal practical knowledge supported by this belief led her to the interaction with the unprepared student, in which she indirectly gave him an instruction on what to do by directing the instruction to the whole class. This interaction helped the student involve himself in the class activity without publicly humiliating or interrogating him, in spite of his unpreparedness. It shows that her practical interaction, designed to match her personal practical knowledge, enabled her to achieve the compatibility between the practice and her belief behind the personal practical knowledge.

The personal practical knowledge explained above seems to be grounded on one of her teaching philosophies: whatever the students do, they need to be responsible for it, but the teacher should help students learn from actions rather than judge them for those behaviors. During the interview, she emphasized that students need to face what they have done and be responsible for it no matter how wonderful or ugly it was. This belief, along with her teaching philosophy that the teacher should not be judgmental on what students have done, supported the compatibility with her personal practical knowledge and her interaction practice. This compatibility seems to be the key element that made the unprepared student involved in the class activity afterwards.

It should be noted in this incident that her equal treatment for the students was given not just to the one who did not do what he was supposed to do, but also to those who did it. When the student came into the classroom late, she prioritized the majority of the students who came to the class when they were supposed to come and continued the explanation for them. This choice of interaction ensured the students would be involved in the class activity without impediment. It can be analyzed that her teaching philosophy, "whatever the students do, they need to be responsible for it," made her focus on the students' responsibility to listen to the explanation during the class. In this respect, it can be concluded that the teacher's teaching philosophy can directly influence her teaching practice and create compatible relationship between the two.

Interestingly, the personal practical knowledge raised in this incident seems to be supported by another teaching philosophy of hers: the teacher must make sure that the students are supported not just by her but also by the whole class community. This philosophy reinforced her equal treatment of the students by supporting the same personal practical knowledge that the other teaching philosophy also supported. In other words, the teacher's interactions observed in the first incident were shaped from the personal practical knowledge, which was grounded on the two different teaching philosophies. This suggests that the teacher considered and reflected her teaching philosophies deeply to form her personal practical knowledge.

Laurel offers the following reflection on this incident.
In my teaching philosophy, I list five key elements of my teaching: choice and structure are the first two. I write, "Choices mean that students make decisions. Decision-making involves, or should, some critical thinking, some consideration of goals, of the future, of the larger context. In other words, students will learn from making choices, even if they don't know they are." Students are often late to class, and they are often un- or under-prepared. If, as teachers, we can anticipate a behavior routinely occurring, we should be prepared to deal with it within the framework of our teaching philosophy and our experiences. When I think about the future or goals, I think not just of students' larger goals, but more immediate futures and goals—helping a peer is a likely future when the schedule of work says that's what we'll do. When I think of larger contexts, the classroom is one of those contexts: it is not all about one student, and if I can avoid, through my practice, making it about one person, I will. When I write about structure, it's not just the structure of that day's lesson. Students are familiar with some cultural classroom structures. In the United States, there are many, many passive learning contexts in K-12 education. However, if I am structuring a course around choices, "passive" is going to be secondary to "active." Having created a structure that requires and offers choice, and having rewarded and modeled active learning, the choice of students to help one another learn—by offering the unprepared student a copy of a draft—and my choice to make learning more important than punishment reinforces crucial, larger structures in immediate ways. "Structure" and "choice" are abstract ideas—until you are in a classroom. Did the students in the classroom know they were learning something? Probably not! But if the event repeated itself and I instead stopped what I was doing and chastised the student, they would immediately note that difference—such awareness indicates learning.

Snapshot 2: "So, what I'm trying to do is to reinforce why they are there and that they are supported by not just me but the whole group of people who are trying to make sure that they stay." (From Laurel's interview)
The second pedagogical incident involves the teacher's

planned interaction with students that reflected her personal practical knowledge. During the observation period, the teacher always came to the classroom early to interact with the students. One day, she brought in a newspaper article, which reported an accomplishment of one of the students already present in the class. She first offered a greeting, asking the students how they were, and then started to talk about the newspaper article as additional students arrived for class. She read the article aloud and asked several questions of the student whose accomplishments were lauded. At that point, the other students were paying attention to the teacher and the student, and they started to join the conversation between them. After talking for a while, she started to prepare for the class. However, the conversation about the article was continued for a few more minutes among the students until the class formally started.

In her reflection on this incident, she explained that the reason behind it was "*to make sure that the students' achievements are noted.*" This explanation, which can also stand to be her personal practical knowledge by itself, was supported by her teaching philosophy that the teacher must make sure that the students are supported not just by her but also by the whole class community. She writes in her philosophy: "It is so important to start where your students are. This doesn't mean to be their best buds, Facebook friend them all, or get personal. It means to think about what they do with their lives." In the same vein as the first incident, this incident also demonstrates that the compatibility among the teaching philosophy, personal practical knowledge and the practical interaction resulted in the successful interaction within the classroom.

Importantly, the personal practical knowledge explained above was not the only piece that can explain her practical interaction in this case; there is another possible piece of personal practical knowledge that can explain this practical interaction. During the interview, she explained her thoughts about the sharing of personal stories:

So, what I'm trying to do is to reinforce why they are there and that they are supported by not just me but a whole group of people who are trying to make sure that they stay. So I think that the sense that they are community, and [the fact that] I'm not there just to give information, make some big different points [in their participations in the class].

Based on this consideration, she developed another personal practical knowledge: sharing of personal stories within the class enhances the students' sense of community. This explains her decision on sharing the article about one student's personal achievement with the class. This element of personal practical knowledge is seen in other decisions as well. In the interview, she mentioned that she sent the syllabus to the students prior to the semester; in the syllabus, she included personal stories about her teaching career as well as her love for

teaching. She explained that she did this to make herself real to the students by sharing herself. Also, in the three observations, she spent time in each class sharing her own stories, as well as eliciting those of the students. Importantly, in these incidents, the teacher actively created opportunities to transfer her personal practical knowledge into practice. These are planned choices, not just responses to the students as in the case of the first incident. In other words, to some extent she constructed the classroom interactions in advance by knowing her students, noticing accomplishment, and bringing the article to share it with the class, as well as by sending the syllabus before the semester and planning to take time during class meetings to share her personal experiences. These planned activities seem to have enhanced the compatibility of her teaching philosophy and the teaching practice.

Comparison of the two pieces of personal practical knowledge introduced for the second incident reveals that the personal practical knowledge is a multi-layered set of knowledge that can be supported by the same teaching philosophy. The first piece of personal practical knowledge, *the teacher needs to make sure that the students' achievements are noted*, can be categorized under the second piece, *sharing of personal stories within the class enhances the students' sense of community*. These were both grounded on the same teaching philosophy, *the teacher must make sure that the students are supported not just by her but also by the whole class community*. These two different pieces of personal practical knowledge resulted in different teaching practices, yet these practices corresponded with the teaching philosophy.

Laurel offers the following comments.
Talking with Kaz about community led me back to my written teaching philosophy. I thought I had something in there about that concept. I was surprised to find that I did NOT address it. Why, I wondered, had I left that out?

I think, for me, it is so deeply a part of my teaching that it underlies almost all that I do. It is like water for the fish. I swim in it.

What I DO have that seems appropriate, though it does not directly address community, comes from my discussion of another the elements of my philosophy: curiosity.

I have to be curious and I have to inspire curiosity in students. I have never met a boring person—honestly. If I can talk long enough to a person and let them feel comfortable, I will find what interests them, and that interests me. Someone who is an expert on widgets? Great! In class, I ask students LOTS of questions. I model curiosity for them. Many have been taught to be quiet, to not ask questions, to not 'disrupt' whatever highly-structured lesson is going on. […] Choice and time to explore with some guidance helps students understand where curiosity can lead them.

Of course, most of us have explored things that interest us, have looked for answers to hard questions, have tried to fulfill curious impulses. That CAN be a solitary activity, but here we are, in a class with a couple dozen people—for me, the most natural way to explore is to ask THEM. They then ask each other, we share, we might pull out technology and try to look for answers and help each other. I understand the need for some restraint in classrooms—side conversations are disruptive to the larger group. I don't understand, however, classroom practices that squash curiosity, that don't have avenues or hallways or secret passageways to new knowledge that students are so excited to find that they can't help but turn to their neighbor at the table or in the chair next to them and say, in one way or another, "Come explore with me!"

Ask most people about a concept or an idea and they will turn it into a discussion of anecdotes, experiences—that is, ways in which they have navigated the world. Stories. And students make choices in class because they talk with each other and, of course, with me. We are changed. I remember one student saying that one of her peers was so brave with what she chose to write about that she felt she had to step up, too, and she picked a new topic that made her scared but excited. In that discussion, she acknowledged her classmate, she contextualized her choices, and she invited others to be open and share. She helped create community. I sometimes take a deep breath because of what I am about to say. How can I ask them to be brave and not model it for them?

Yes, Kaz is right. Some of what I do is planned. My experiences have taught me that early contact lays a foundation for community. Including personal information in what is usually a rather dry, almost legal document like a syllabus makes students think twice about what will be happening. Sharing something different and interesting about how I experienced school will usually inspire students to share similarly. People trained in negotiation look for common ground, but teachers aren't usually taught to find that with students. Traditionally (and particularly for new 9-12 teachers who may be very close in age to their students), establishing a distance is encouraged—maintaining your authority by highlighting difference. I have been told by colleagues from other cultures and countries that the sharing of personal stories by instructors is also discouraged in many other countries unless they are inspiring and reinforce traditional structures. Otherwise, personal stories undermine authority and are seen as irrelevant to learning, reducing "time on task."

Beyond what is planned as part of developing community, I must respond to unpredictable moments, gauging how to guide students toward finding common ground and interests and exploring real and significant differences without tearing a hole in the community we have all worked hard to develop. Teachers can plan all they want—but students hold the real power as they respond or resist.

Professional development insights

Even though the two pedagogical incidents described above seem to be very different from each other, they have some practical implications for professional development in terms of how teachers can develop the compatibility between their teaching philosophy and their teaching practices. As Tsang's (2004) study demonstrated, a teacher's personal practical knowledge is formed by their philosophy of teaching as well as their practical experiences. Based on the observations, the interview with the teacher and her reflective comments on the incidents, Kaz analyzed Laurel's personal practical knowledge, as a medium between her teaching philosophy and her teaching practices. Her interactions with students were analyzed as direct indications of her teaching practices.

The analysis of the two incidents has provided several important implications for teachers' professional development. First, it is important to reflect and upon the teaching philosophies deeply to make the teaching practice compatible with the philosophies. Second, observations and interviews suggest that the compatibility between the teaching philosophy and the teaching practices can be mediated by the personal practical knowledge. Teachers need to form personal practical knowledge that can be supported by and enacted in their teaching practice as they manage the classroom interaction. Third, observation, reflection and analysis show that both applying several different elements of a teaching philosophy to one piece of personal practical knowledge and forming multiple pieces of practical knowledge on one teaching philosophy can be a powerful strategy to generate teaching practices effective for students. Finally, it was demonstrated that the planning of classroom interaction based on the personal practical knowledge was an effective way to build compatibility between the teaching practice and teaching philosophy.

Furthermore, the overall process of the observations, the interview and the reflective comments revealed that reflection on the three aspects of teaching helps the teacher achieve the compatibility among the three. One important implication from Tsang's (2004) study was that the teachers' post-reflection provided an opportunity for them to develop their personal practical knowledge and would raise consciousness of practical situations in teaching. Farrell (2010) emphasized the importance of reflective activities for teachers' professional development. He stated that:

> [T]eaching experience is not enough in itself, for we do not learn much from these experiences as much as we learn from reflecting on the experiences, and so experience (no matter how much or how little) combined with systematic reflections (...) leads to professional growth and more confident and effective (...) teachers (p. 37).

His argument on the importance of reflection implied that the gap between the teachers' beliefs and

practices could be closed through their reflections on what they do and why they do it. In other words, the reflective practices that teachers engage in are possibly powerful tools that help them raise consciousness of their personal practical knowledge, teaching philosophy and teaching practices, and develop compatibility among them for their professional development. Finally, reflecting on the teaching philosophy during the class is inevitable for teachers to develop efficiency in their teaching. As the teacher in this present study said, "*It's possible to make most events into teachable moments if a teacher keeps his/her teaching philosophy in mind, keeps what's important in mind.*"

Laurel adds, however, that teaching circumstances may make that kind of in-the-moment awareness difficult if not impossible. Rigid control of materials by supervisory staff, overcrowding, unrealistic expectations for outcomes, and lack of teaching experience are all likely to lead to a disjuncture between teaching philosophy and teaching practices. The lack of time and support for reflection on classroom events that can lead to personal practical knowledge has ramifications for student outcomes, experience, and teacher satisfaction and performance. The presence of an observer and the chance to reflect and discuss can be enormously helpful in filling that void between what Kaz and other researchers see as brackets for effective teaching.

Kaz's reflections on lessons learned
It has to be acknowledged that the personal practical knowledge analyzed in this review was not an objective entity that can be drawn from the teacher's beliefs or consideration; rather, it was treated as a set of possible interpretations that explain the teacher's thoughts behind her actions, reinforced by interviews and reflection. In other words, personal practical knowledge is a flexible explanation that can guide teachers or observers to analyze the relationship between the teaching philosophy and the teaching practices, which helps the teachers establish a compatible relationship between the two. Therefore, it is not the purpose of this observation study to examine whether novice teachers can effectively apply the exact teaching philosophies and the exact pieces of personal practical knowledge shown in this study to their own teaching practices. The study is not meant to, nor could it, result in a clear "how-to" list of practices. Rather, this study tried to help novice teachers with their professional development by providing some observations of how the compatibility between the teaching philosophy and the teaching practice can be achieved, as well as some strategies for achieving it. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) suggested, teaching is situational; therefore, one specific strategy that worked effectively does not necessarily work in the other situation. However, I believe that successful teaching leaves clues, and learning from how things work effectively, instead of waiting for a set of guidelines for what works effectively, will help teachers develop their ways of teaching.

Laurel's reflections on lessons learned
Kaz's references to clues reminds me of Locard's Principle of Exchange. It is part of every standard text on criminal investigation. Edmund Locard, who started the first criminal forensics lab in Lyons, France, is widely quoted as saying, "Whenever two objects come in contact with each other, there is an exchange of material between them." Classrooms are not crime scenes, but like crime scenes, they are interactional events. Students and teachers leave traces of that interaction on each other. Most of the time, we are not aware of those traces. Observers, however, help us look for them, point them out, help us understand what those traces mean to us as teachers and learners.

A wise colleague of mine once said that good teachers love their students. I thought long about all the ways that we support those we love. We show genuine interest in their lives and share with them about our own lives, creating ties that thread us together. We support them in their goals. We set clear, high standards for interaction and help them meet those, because we respect ourselves and our futures. We trust them. We compromise when it is right and necessary. Did I do these things with my students?

This reflection led me to thinking about all the ways we support WHAT we love. If, for example, I love the ocean, do I support organizations that fight to maintain the health of the world's oceans? Do I make sure not to disturb the shoreline, to put trash into the ocean? Do I avoid taking cruises where garbage and waste are dumped from huge ships as they ply their routes? If I love teaching and learning, what do I do the make sure that my teaching "works," and that my students and I are always learning?

I was mentored as a graduate student, given the opportunity to observe teaching and be observed, given feedback, encouraged to reflect on my teaching and learning, and given freedom as well as advice in creating syllabi. When I have made errors in my teaching—have hurt students in some way, have done or been less than my best—it is when I have not kept the fundamental tenets of my teaching philosophy in mind. It has also been when I am in a context for which I have either not developed personal practical knowledge or don't recognize how to transfer what I do know.

The value and privilege of having a novice teacher in my classroom and as a conversational partner afterwards is to become aware of my teaching, because practice can then become transparent to us. What Kaz calls "pedagogical incidents" were invisible to me when they occurred, for in customary practice, every class meeting is a single pedagogical incident, where most events slide fairly seamlessly into one another. I can't manufacture the work a student is missing, but maybe another student (and most of us have those "over-prepared" or "super-diligent" students!) can help. And they do. For me, then, the late entrance of that student was not even something I noticed. My request to his peers for their assistance and support seemed to me to be an unconscious decision. Kaz froze the incident,

showed it to me, helped me go back and sort it out.

Everything I do as a teacher sends a message, and sharing information about a student's award tells students that I care, that they are worthy of public praise, and reminds them that, even if they are struggling in some way in college, they HAVE accomplished something at another time. And, perhaps, it reminds them of when their families or friends gather to share good news and accomplishments.

One semester, I was diagnosed with cancer and had to take sick leave a month before my courses ended. Until the end of the semester, however, students sent me emails, a card they all signed, well wishes, and updates. We were—are—a community. All of us learners will take away a very few, very important lessons from each class, each incident. Sometimes, I forget that, immersed in the big picture. Kaz helped me see again the details, the small acts that make up the whole, the links between belief and action.

CONCLUSION

Teaching is a lifelong journey where a teacher, whether beginner or experienced, continues to shape the knowledge domains of what it means to be an effective teacher. Through reflecting on course readings and observing an experienced classroom teacher, Kaz was able to begin a dialogic practice with Laurel to reflect on how one's personal practical knowledge can be a mediating piece in understanding teacher philosophy and classroom pedagogical practices. It is in mentoring programs where we create spaces for both experienced and beginning teachers that we can begin to understand what it means to raise awareness of and continue to build on (English) language teachers' knowledge domains. We welcome other teacher education programs to create these spaces for future teachers.

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Appendix A

Teaching Philosophy: Laurel Johnson Black

My father died without a will. That wasn't a surprise, since he wasn't much for writing anything; he was a face-to-face kind of guy: a plumber, mechanic, carpenter, Jack-of-all-trades. But after his death, while cleaning out some of the items in his garage, I found a little envelope, the kind in which banks give you back money if you use a drive-through. On it, he had written his wishes for his funeral. More interesting and wonderful, however, was the sentence that preceded his wishes: "My curious mind is still."

For him, the cessation of curiosity was the sign that it was time to move from this life to the next, whatever that might be. Some sense of the death of the mind, of wonder, of questing and questioning—and his awareness of the desire to know and learn as crucial to his sense of being—prompted him to pick up a pen, grab this little envelope, and write about his death.

Sometimes, I feel I am confronted by students whose curious minds are still. As a teacher, it's my job to help start their curiosity pumping again. Not all learning is about passion, and certainly I teach a lot of students who are not passionate about writing and reading. But they are passionate about something, and if I give them the choice and the chance to explore that "something," I can link skills and knowledge to passion and be successful.

Choice. Structure. Curiosity. Learning. Start with your students.

I try to offer students as many productive choices as I can. If I can offer them the choice of a topic, I will. If I can offer them the choice of a genre, an intended audience, a piece of reading, I will. If I can offer them a choice of citation format, I will. Choices mean that students make decisions. Decision-making involves, or should, some critical thinking, some consideration of goals, of the future, of the larger context. In other words, students will learn from making choices, even if they don't know they are. In another class, when they are not offered choices, they will feel the chafing of that control and realize what they learned from their previous freedom.

Choices need to be "informed." So without structure, all learners go astray. While "astray" *can* mean moving toward surprising discoveries, in a high-stakes environment like most college classes, aimless wandering and sudden surprise are not always the best activities and outcomes. It is important to me as a teacher to offer whatever students need to make informed decisions. If a student says he wants to write a memoir, I need to be sure he has a clear understanding of what that involves and what skills he brings with him and what he will need to add. If a student chooses to work with a topic that is fraught with controversy, I need to help her think of ways to navigate that.

In practice, choice and structure usually mean a great deal of work: finding samples, locating or designing materials to support a wide range of choices, and educating myself about, perhaps, topics or genres less familiar to me. Assembling these pieces of learning structure and making them available when needed, offering appropriate class time and being able to juggle, in the classroom itself, a range of projects at one time takes work and practice.

I have to be curious and I have to inspire curiosity in students. I have never met a boring person—honestly. If I can talk long enough to a person and let them feel comfortable, I will find what interests them, and that interests me. Someone who is an expert on widgets? Great! In class, I ask students LOTS of questions. I model curiosity for them. Many have been taught to be quiet, to not ask questions, to not "disrupt" whatever highly-structured lesson is going on. I am genuinely excited about learning, so when a student teaches me about Death Metal music, I love it. When someone teaches me about muscle cars, another about lizards, one about slang—I love it! Choice and time to explore with some guidance helps students understand where curiosity can lead them.

I think teachers should always be learning. It's so very, very easy to keep teaching the same stuff, year after year. We have little time to totally re-design a course, to make huge, sweeping changes. So we tweak, for the most part. And we forget, then, having taught from a particular book for five years, how very, very hard it is to learn. Teachers should take a course or join a group that will challenge them. In the recent past, I've taken a play-by-ear guitar class and a belly-dancing class. I have tried my hand at origami and art. I have played badly and wrapped myself up so tightly in a dance scarf that I had to be unwound. In a computer-training class, I was in tears by noon—I felt so stupid and useless. If you do not keep experiencing the pain of learning, the joy of it disappears for you, too.

It is so important to start where your students are. This doesn't mean to be their best buds, Facebook friend them all, or get personal. It means to think about what they do with their lives, what they listen to, what they watch, what they think is valuable. It is amazing how many students are terribly excited when I can talk of my experience being on a reality television show, something I did BECAUSE my students love that stuff and I wanted to see what it was like. I have amazing credibility because of that one thing—sadly. But how many watch this show or that? Watch an episode. We forget that this is exactly what we do when we are entering a discipline. Someone we want to learn from suggests an article or mentions, in a presentation, this book. Immediately, we find this resource and read it so that we, too, can join that conversation and build on it. So if I watch an episode of *Ridiculousness*, so what? (Sometimes, it's really funny!) *Drunk History*? Great show. And if I start where my students do in the content of their lives, I am much more likely to start where they can most benefit in teaching them how to write better, think more critically, ask better questions, find the joy in learning. Gotta keep all curious minds from going still.