

Some Pragmatic (but Inspiring) Principles for Teaching Languages in the 21st Century

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As a second language acquisition researcher, in the past 20 years I have witnessed great changes in the disciplinary understandings of key aspects of language teaching. How many of these changes are fleeting fashion trends, and which ones are likely to endure? What are the consequences of these changes for language teaching, realistically and idealistically speaking? Asking ourselves these questions is important, in times when the humanistic values that traditionally justified world language education are in crisis, when the dominance of English seems unstoppable, and when according to the United Nations (2017) 3.4 per cent of the world's population (approximately 258 million people) live in a country other than their original one, many of them leading multilingual lives by force as much as by choice. In this talk, I consider changes regarding four areas: the balance between form and meaning in instruction, approaches to pedagogical grammar, the role of authentic materials and native speaker models, and strategies that boost student motivation. I offer my own personal selection of broad principles for language teaching that I believe are feasible to implement yet will inspire the teaching of *levende talen* for years to come.

Biography: Lourdes Ortega is a Professor at Georgetown University. She investigates how adults learn new languages, particularly in higher education settings. She is best known for an award-winning meta-analysis of second language instruction published in 2000, a best-seller graduate-level textbook *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (Routledge 2009, translated into Mandarin in 2016), and for championing a bilingual and social justice turn in her field of second language acquisition. Her latest books are *Usage-inspired L2 Instruction*, published this year with John Benjamins (co-edited with applied cognitive linguist Andrea Tyler and colleagues) and *The Handbook of Bilingualism*, currently under production with Cambridge University Press (co-edited with infant bilingualism researcher Annick De Houwer). Lourdes was born, raised, and college-educated in southern Spain, spent a year abroad at the University of Munich in the early 1980s, worked as a teacher of Spanish for almost a decade in Greece, and obtained her doctorate in the United States, where she has lived for 25 years now. She works with language educators and doctoral students and is committed to investigating what it means to become bilingual or multilingual later in life in ways that can encourage connections between research and teaching and promote the well-being of learners. Life has taken place for her in four different countries (so far), each in a different dominant language: Spanish, German, Modern Greek, and English. This trajectory has had a profound impact on her as an educator and a researcher, encouraging her to pursue a balance of pragmatism and idealism in her research and teaching.

