*Teaching Statement*

My personal approach to teaching EFL and applied linguistics draws on and merges problem-solving-approaches, research-based teaching as well as a constant bridging of theory and practice. It has developed throughout 10 years of full-time English teaching in schools and 10 years of teaching applied linguistics at tertiary institutions in Germany, Ireland, and Austria. Concerning proficiency levels, my teaching has covered all levels of foreign and second language learners, from A1 (beginners) to C2 (near-native). Furthermore, a substantial variety of classes, topics and approaches has given me invaluable insights into the possibilities and limits of instructed foreign language teaching.

I strongly believe in research-based teaching and bridging theory and practice, because a teacher's didactical, methodological, and curricular decisions should always be based on a sound and thorough understanding of the underlying linguistic and psycholinguistic concepts. Not only are those concepts worthwhile and enriching objects of inquiry in their own right, but they provide the necessary craftsmanship to meet everyday problems and practical challenges systematically and professionally. Therefore, bringing theory and its relevance for practical application to life is a prime objective in my teaching. This in turn shapes my understanding of the instructor's role at tertiary level. While a lot of instructors have, probably, been prone to adopting the role of a priest, with higher knowledge of the subject matter, leading students to catechistically regurgitate content and familiar examples, real-fife and meaningful application would be strongly discouraged by such an approach to teaching and learning. In contrast, I have always tried to pull back the curtain and provide opportunities to understand and appreciate theoretical concepts, models, and scientific evidence as an obligatory step towards practical implementation. On the one hand, such an approach helps demystify the often-dreaded world of academia and science; applied linguistics and language acquisition are anything but mysterious scientific truths. On the other hand, I thereby emphasise that all the concepts and ideas under scrutiny relate to, and, in fact, build upon prior knowledge, expertise, and skills. Thus, what is taught at present will serve as the basis for future endeavours. Neither theories nor models arise in a vacuum, and the importance of understanding the cumulative nature of the study of applied linguistics and language acquisition cannot be overstated.

I strongly believe in the problem-solving approach in teaching languages and applied linguistics. Teaching should not be restricted to giving students recipes and arming them with a chest of magical, ready-made one-size-fits-all materials. Those materials will be exhausted at some point, and then students wouldn't know how to refill this chest. Instead, teaching should provide opportunities in problem-solving skills, creativity, and divergent thinking. At all levels of linguistic inquiry, the key to solving problems creatively is to recast them as something for which we can find appropriate approaches, methods, routines, and – eventually – meaningful applications in the pertinent fields of work. Exposing students to such problems and problem-solving routines ultimately produces students with a robust skill set, since, in their profession as teachers, they must be able to use these skills in their respective environments in order to both perform in the classroom and further develop their own expertise.

The following examples are supposed to illustrate this approach. When teaching phonetics and phonology, for instance, I usually confront students with so-called *phonological rules*, in other words, with parts of a language's grammar. Understanding such rules has merits in itself, because the nature of a language's phonology is a well-established, interesting, but still largely unexplored field of academic study in its own right. However, the mastery of such rules can inform and practically aid the teaching of good pronunciation in a classroom. Understanding the allophones of the English *s*-morpheme (3rd person, genitive, and plural), for example, can be a means to help learners predict the appropriate inflections, thereby enabling them to carefully monitor their own output autonomously. In morphology classes, theories of inflection and word-formation could be used to help planning and carrying out meaningful vocabulary work. There would be many more examples like these. They all show quite plainly that excelling in the practical field presupposes theoretical mastery; how else can an English teacher, for instance, teach the idiosyncratic pronunciation pattern of *fruit pie*, the accurate plural of *chicken* and why so many speakers and learners avoid it, or the correct orthographic handling of words like *travel(l)ing* and *model(l)ing*.

In sum, what I aim to accomplish in my tertiary teaching is to help students reach an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question, appreciate the scientific work behind these phenomena, and, finally, make them realise that this understanding is a necessary prerequisite for their prospective careers. Many years of experience have proven that this is an intriguingly ambitious endeavour, but I feel compelled to try to achieve these ends.