

Small teaching in a big way: (Re)conceptualising phonological pedagogy using evidence-based practices

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A year and a half of remote and hybrid instruction due to the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed many instructors into the world of pedagogy, buzzwords and all. Some pedagogical strategies can seem daunting to implement in full (e.g., specifications-based grading; backwards design; flipping the classroom), and so faculty learning centres often encourage instructors to make “just one small change”, incrementing their teaching as they go.

Drawing on some of the core ideas of Lang’s *Small Teaching: Everyday lessons from the Science of Learning*, in this talk I consider “small teaching” writ large. That is, I consider how three “small teaching” strategies – *interleaving*, *predicting*, and *connecting* – can guide a (re)conceptualization of how we structure phonology classes and assessments. I first introduce these pedagogical strategies in a small way with exemplifying activities I use in my classes, including, for example, concept maps, a class wiki, and reflection conversations.

I then pivot to a discussion of how these principles might guide course planning and design, using my approach to teaching phonetics and phonology in an introductory class as a case study. We often speak of building “strong foundations”, a metaphor which evokes brick laying: that is, that course content builds in a linear and sequential fashion, with emphasis placed on the mastery of one concept before the next is introduced. In contrast, the principles of *interleaving*, *predicting*, and *connecting* suggest a metaphor that is inspired, perhaps, by the fiber arts: one in which course themes are threads of thought that are interwoven, dropped and picked up over time, pushing the fringes into other fields of inquiry, and with the patterns of inquiry revealed over the course of the semester and in different, perhaps unconventional, assessment types.