

Benoît Verplancke, M.A.

Basic Information

Department

ICP- International Careers Program

IDIOMAS- School of Foreign Languages & Applied Linguistics

Educational Background

- B.A. Erasmus Department of Applied Linguistics in French, Dutch and Spanish
- B.A. VLEKHO Department of Applied Linguistics in English Translation
- M.A. VLEKHO Department of Applied Linguistics in Interpretation

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching languages is a challenge as most students often think it is impossible to acquire fluency in another language. When they complain it is difficult I always say: “Why, there are 3-year-olds who speak this language, so it must be easy!” Then I off course remind them that we aren’t babies anymore and that as adults, we must hard to acquire vocabulary and grammar structures. I especially point out the fact that all language knowledge should be almost at the level of automatic reactions if one wants to speak fluently, as one does not have the time to look up a word in a dictionary or to think 20 minutes about what tense to use when one is having a conversation with a native speaker. Hence repetition is very important for the mind.

As to teaching Intercultural Communication in various related courses, it suffices to give the students examples of the many misunderstandings between cultures that have triggered wars, tremendous commercial losses for companies or political crises between nations. Students soon realize that knowing and respecting other cultures is essential to be a successful manager.

Teaching Specialties

- Language courses of all levels
- World Civilization
- Intercultural Communication

Professional Profile

As a former T & I student, I had to learn many foreign languages myself and I guess one of the best ways to motivate the students to learn one’s language is to speak their language well, which creates a system of reciprocity.

Having learned several foreign languages, one also knows which the key points for successful learning are. Especially by comparing the source language linguistics with the target language linguistics one can reasonably foresee which points of grammar and vocabulary will be most difficult to understand for the student.

I worked as a translator before becoming a teacher and as such have been able to witness that speaking a language is not the only requirement for a successful intercultural communicator. It is not enough to translate literally what one thinks, that would be synonymous to being a “fluent fool”. In intercultural interactions one needs to take into account the different ways of encoding and decoding and the variations in perception systems between cultures; hence my experience and interest in intercultural communication.

Another important point is knowledge about the history of other cultures and the world as a whole. This is why World Civilization is one of the topics I teach, as I firmly believe any citizen of this globalized world should have certain notions of where we come from and what has happened throughout the thousands of years of human history.

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