

Introduction to new *andererseits* Forum on Pedagogy

STEFFEN KAUPP

In *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*, Susan Ambrose et al. distill a comprehensive selection of major works from the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) into seven researched-based principles, which are meant to guide instructors' curricular and pedagogical decisions in a way that maximizes student learning. Highlighting the importance of practice and feedback, the authors' fifth principle states that »[g]oal-directed practice coupled with targeted feedback enhances the quality of students' learning«¹. What is important about this principle is the fact that both practice and feedback are qualified by the adjectives »goal-directed« and »targeted« respectively. Practice only enhances student learning if it focuses on a specific goal, targets an appropriate level of challenge, and is sufficient in quantity and frequency.² Effective feedback, in turn, must be given at the right time to allow for learning to be shaped before misconceptions can form; students need formative feedback at early stages of the learning process. When goal-specific practice and targeted feedback work hand-in-hand, there are significant benefits to students' learning.

It might be surprising to the curious reader that the introduction to our new pedagogy section starts with a reflection on such a specific element of student learning. When the editors of *andererseits* decided to add a Forum on Pedagogy to the yearbook, they envisioned this new section to become a forum in the truest sense of the word: A space for *open discussion* and the *sharing of ideas* relevant to the fields of German Studies pedagogy, and the scholarship of teaching and learning more generally. Rather than offering merely theoretical reflections on pedagogy, we look forward to featuring essays that are very much grounded in the excellent hands-on work that German Studies instructors are doing in classrooms on both sides of the Atlantic. As a forum for best practices in German Studies teaching, the *andererseits* Forum on Pedagogy is built upon the learning principle of goal-directed practice and targeted feedback, this time, however, un-

1 | Susan Ambrose et al.: *How Learning Works. Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Jossey-Bass 2010, p. 125.

2 | Cf. *ibid.*, p. 125-127.

derstood from the side of faculty and teaching development rather than student learning.

The essays here follow the ethos of goal-directed practice, in that all authors present innovative approaches to very specific challenges in their everyday teaching practices. CLAIRE TAYLOR JONES's challenge was to develop a scaffolded approach to help students »transition from the kind of personal reflection writing that dominates first- and second-year courses to the genre of literary analysis that we expect in the upper levels.« In her essay, which also features some of her students' writing, she reflects on the effectiveness of creative writing assignments to ease the transition from personal writing to literary analysis.

CLAIRE E. SCOTT and MATTHEW HAMBRO discuss the challenges and benefits of implementing a graphic novel on the Berlin wall into the second-semester German language curriculum. Scott and Hambro didacticized *Berlin – Geteilte Stadt* in response to feedback on earlier iterations of the course, in which students lamented a lack of more in-depth discussions about important cultural topics, rather than a primary focus on solely developing language skills. In their essay, Scott and Hambro reflect on the benefits of using a graphic narrative to frame debates about the Berlin wall, and they also elaborate on how the confluence of visual and textual elements does indeed foster students' language production skills, while also immersing them in new cultural knowledge.

LAURA LIEBER reflects in her essay on the challenges of designing and teaching a six-week summer study abroad course on the topic of Jewish Berlin. She discusses how her course raises issues and questions that require students to engage with and understand questions arising from Jewish Studies, German culture and history, and the academic study of Religion. In reflecting on the advantages of a summer study abroad course, for which the city of Berlin itself turns into both the classroom, and object of study, she convincingly highlights the importance of focusing on lived and living Judaism, by inviting guests who share their biographies, which inevitably brings up the compelling material from the readings from both primary sources, secondary sources (which stress historical background), and literature.

In the final essay, STEFFEN KAUPP offers a set of strategies for fostering individualized expansion of students' vocabulary, and a scaffolded framework for reviewing grammar in a fourth-semester German course in a way that responds to the needs of each individual student, while still allowing for shared practice of grammar in class. Kaupp takes inspiration for his essay from an earlier iteration of the course, in which students' improvement in the areas of grammar and vocabulary, especially in writing assignments, presented itself as a challenge due to the different needs and skill levels of his students.

Goal-directed practice, thus, is at the core of all instructional and curricular decisions that are featured in these essays. The authors discuss methods that have been tested in their own teaching, and which grew out of a specific instructional challenge or need. Targeted feedback, however, is also crucial to the

mission and vision of the Forum on Pedagogy. For one, we hope that the four essays will inspire other instructors to think about the authors' reflections in dialogue with their own teaching practices. We encourage all readers to share their thoughts and insights with the authors directly, or through the editors, and we also hope that the contributions in this issue inspire future submissions to the pedagogy section.

Lastly, targeted feedback also has been an important aspect of the four authors' conceptualization and implementation of their respective teaching strategies: Based on targeted feedback from students and their own study of teaching and learning scholarship, they responded to a specific challenge with innovative approaches. In order to refine these approaches, they then reflected on the quality of student learning after the new strategies had been implemented in dialogue with their learning outcomes. This is where the model of goal-specific practice and targeted feedback comes full circle: By offering our *andererseits* readers a new Forum on Pedagogy, it is our goal to inspire research- and experience-based exchanges about best teaching practices, in order to showcase the innovative pedagogical work within the field German Studies. This exchange in turn then will allow all of us to take a critical look at, and receive targeted feedback on, our own teaching practices.

