

Elevate the Discourse!

Begin by considering an issue in language teaching and learning that generates a diversity of opinions, such as one of the following:

- *How much target language should we use in language learning experiences?*
- *How important is production for language acquisition, and how does this change depending on proficiency level?*
- *How important is accuracy relative to getting a point across, and relative to a student's affective disposition toward using a new language?*
- *How closely is intercultural communicative competence linked to language proficiency?*

Write the issue that you feel passionate about here (this can be a question, as in the examples above, or a statement):

Now, take a deep breath and remember to cultivate a gracious internal dialogue. In the space below, write what you believe about the issue.

Re-read what you wrote. Is it clear throughout that you believe in yourself as a teacher and in language teaching as a mission, regardless on how you feel about this particular issue? If not, then revise with a more gracious attitude toward yourself and what you do.



Now it's time to try on a different perspective. You are likely to be passionate about this issue in part because others hold different views. In the space below, write one of these other views. For example, "Some of my colleagues believe that the target language must be used 100% of the time."

Are you making the generous assumption that your colleagues are just as passionate about language learning as you are? Consider the two responses below:

My colleague thinks that if you're not using the target language, you're just wasting time. He clearly doesn't care whether or not his students are comfortable in his class.

My colleague thinks that acquisition only happens through exposure to the target language. Therefore, any time spent not in the target language is not actively leading to language acquisition.

If you wrote something like the first response, you are not making generous assumptions! You know that your colleague, just like you, cares deeply about the feelings of his students. Re-read what you wrote, and make any necessary revisions so that you're making the most charitable interpretation possible of your colleague's belief.

Finally, think about how you can apply your insights here to your practice. Are there commonalities between your and your colleague's opinions that you can strengthen in your teaching? Have you found a more positive, affirming way to express your deeply-held belief? Write any takeaways below.