

Sharing ideas for teaching psychology through an international translation project

Joanna Smith & Dana Castro

THE IDEA for an international translation project came to life during the 2014 winter of the polar vortex, when the second author attended, for her first time in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, the annual conference of the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP). About 400 psychology teachers from the US and several other countries were present to make presentations or give posters on their teaching-related work or to attend sessions given by their colleagues through workshops and lectures. Throughout, discussion was vivid and innovative; talks were warm and interactive, handouts and other resources were diverse and abundant, with all materials very well adjusted to various aspects of the teaching process.

Immersed in such a dynamic environment which contrasted sharply with psychology-teaching-related activities going on in France, the second author received a kind of a cognitive shock. She realised then not only that the teaching of psychology might be a very stimulating object of quantitative and qualitative research, but also how vibrant an interest it creates among faculty members and students. She discovered that support for excellence in the teaching of psychology is stronger in the US than perhaps anywhere else in the world. It takes many forms, including university courses and workshops on teaching, initiatives by scholarly organisations, articles in specialised teaching journals, 'teaching tips' columns in scholarly journals, national and regional teaching conferences,

and an enormous array of online resources. Her encounters with American colleagues at the NITOP conference, and especially with Professor Douglas Bernstein of the University of South Florida, convinced her of the need to try to import to her country some of the US's intense interest in the teaching of psychology.

The first step in that direction was to review the resources available on the topic in France. The results were disappointing: psychology departments at institutions of higher education in France offer few courses or workshops on how to teach, there are no journals devoted to the teaching of psychology, no psychology organisations focused specifically on the improvement of teaching, and no teaching conferences at which interested psychology faculty can exchange ideas and discuss possible solutions to these deficits. And though psychology teachers in English-speaking countries around the world can enhance the quality of their teaching by reading US journal articles and accessing written advice and resources on US websites, that information is essentially useless to psychology teachers in the Francophone world who do not read English.

The second step, then, was to try to inform the French psychology faculty community of what was going on abroad in the hope that this information would stimulate local initiatives. Accordingly, the second author, who is Director of the Ecole de Psychologues Praticiens¹ in Paris,

¹ EPP is the only private psychology school in France delivering a national diploma and training professional psychologists.

France (EPP) began a collaboration with Professor Bernstein. Together they successfully applied to the US Association for Psychological Science for a grant from its Myers Fund for the Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science. The goal of the grant project was to identify and translate into French a set of journal articles and other written resources that would be useful to graduate students and young instructors who are, or soon will be, teaching psychology at EPP as well as in the broader French higher educational system. With support from the APS and also the US Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), the translation Project is now well implemented at EPP, which has become a pioneer in the teaching of psychology field by disseminating this kind of information. Founded in 1951, the Ecole de Psychologues Praticiens in Paris offers updated, evidence-based courses in Clinical, Forensic, Educational and Industrial/Organisational psychology for students interested in terminal degrees in the practice of psychology or in pursuing further study for teaching and research careers. As part of the school's efforts to make its courses reflect the latest in psychological science and practice, it has long been its aim to include information about national as well as international trends in the core fields of study that its students pursue. Further, the school's administrators are always looking for new and better ways to teach psychological science and practice.

In this paper, we describe the implementation and current status of the translation project as well as some of the ways in which it has led to further efforts to improve the teaching of psychological science in France.

1. The initial APS-EPP project: Translation to French of research papers on the teaching of psychology

The aim of this project was to make scientific literature on the teaching of psychology available to French-speaking psychologists, students and teachers and to improve

teaching methods in Psychological Science in the Francophone world.

Papers to be translated were selected for their quality, with an emphasis on those which conveyed information that was practical and easy or relatively easy to implement. Three kinds of papers have been chosen:

- 1.1 Papers describing the theoretical background which models the different aspects of the teaching of psychology.
- 1.2 Empirical papers describing research applications which promote active learning and critical thinking in the teaching of psychology.
- 1.3 Practical papers describing teaching tips on monitoring of student attention, class preparation and how to improve student motivation.

More precisely, selected papers related to :

- **basic principles of effective psychology teaching**, like encouraging contact between students and teachers, cooperation between students, active learning, giving prompt feedback, 'time on task' emphasis, communicating high expectations, respecting the diverse talents and ways of learning of students, being organised and prepared, communicating enthusiasm and being fair and ethical (Goss Lucas & Bernstein, 2004) or like connecting to Psychological Science, committing to Evidence-Based Practice, adapting treatment to the person, and becoming all that a clinical psychologist can be (Norcross & Karpiak, 2012);
- **the impact of testing on learning** (Carpenter, 2012; Khanna, Badura Brack & Finken, 2013 ; Grünh & Cheng, 2014, Nguyen & Mc Daniel, 2015), for example conditions that help testing enhance learning or the transfer of learning;
- **the promotion of exchange in the classroom** (Larkin & Pines 2005), and the use of questions and answers to promote learning;
- **active learning** (Miserandino, 1998; Yoder & Hochevar, 2005; Richmond & Kindelberger Hagan, 2011), based on students creating knowledge for themselves

through in-class problem-based activities, synthesising multiple psychology theories, and small and large group discussions. The translated papers develop different kinds of ways to implement active learning. Examples are: note-taking, the use of questions, interactive lectures, case studies, problem-solving lectures, writing assignments, demonstrations and exercises, whole class debates, group activities, role-playing, simulation games or the use of computers and the World Wide Web.

- **teacher behaviours which enhance learning and student motivation** (Buskist & Keeley, 2014; Richmond et al., 2014), including the teacher's training, expertise, teaching skills, good syllabi, assessments and student evaluations;
- **the teaching of critical thinking** (Adam & Manson, 2014; Lilienfeld, 2010), through the use of a pseudoscience activity and the confrontation of psychological misconceptions;
- **the use of rubrics to teach scientific writing** (Greenberg, 2015), through having students assess each other's scientific writings with a rubric and re-writing their own papers after such an assessment (without any intermediate feedback);
- **the use of student management teams** (Troisi, 2014), and their effect on student performance and engagement;
- **the use of teaching technology** (Poling & LoSchiavo, 2014).

These translated papers are made available through the APS and EPP websites and publicised through newsletters. The project's utility is regularly measured by the number of visitors to the site. By mid-2015, there had already been 1298 unique page views.

2. Applying translated ideas in teaching the teaching of psychology

The translation of these papers naturally led to a renewal of teaching methods in EPP particularly, but also to the creation of a new course for our final-year psychology students, aiming to teach them the teaching of psychology.

2.1 Why teach the teaching of psychology to final-year psychology students?

Our teaching team has realised in the past few years how many young psychologists are asked to give training sessions on psychology or teach to various kinds of audiences: nurses, doctors, midwives, social workers, foster families, police officers, judges, teachers, educators, company managers... or students in those fields.

However, these young psychologists have to improvise their teaching techniques and strategies as they have never received a training of any kind on the teaching of psychology. We thus decided to fill such a gap by giving them a four-hour workshop on the teaching of psychology, during their last year of studies, based on the papers translated and rendered available through the APS-EPP translation project.

2.2 How to teach the teaching of psychology: The use of active learning

This four-hour workshop is designed to allow the students to experience the techniques they are encouraged to use when they find themselves in a teaching role in the future.

Our first aim at the beginning of the workshop is to have students experience an unpleasant teaching experience! This allows the teacher to refer back to it during the rest of the workshop as an example of the opposite of gold-standard teaching. The workshop starts with the teacher voluntarily pretending to teach poorly by reading a one-minute text without looking at the class, and in a tiresome tone, telling them they won't have a break during these four hours and that they should not ask questions or interrupt! Quickly, students are reassured that this is only a bad joke to make them experience poor teaching and what they should avoid doing.

The second aim of this workshop is to get the students involved in it. Using active learning, the teacher asks the group to consider whether they think they will be teaching psychology some time in their career and to whom. The group brainstorms on this for a few minutes and then exchanges ideas.

The third aim of this workshop is to have students realise what kind of skills and techniques are associated with the teaching they most enjoyed during their studies, working in groups of four to six and then giving feedback to the whole group. This feedback is completed with a review of the literature on the subject (Beers et al., 2014; Castro & Le Brazidec, 2015), stressing the importance of educational skills, benevolence, content mastery (expertise), language skills, charisma and organisation.

Short videos of two teachers (one in physics, the other in psychology) are shown to illustrate active learning, and the students are asked to describe what they like or don't like in those two lessons. The fourth aim of the lesson is to address teaching anxiety (Bernstein, 1983; Goss Lucas & Bernstein, 2015).

Last but not least, the fifth aim of the lesson is to give the students specific teaching tips and strategies by having each of them read one of the APS-EPP translated papers. Each student summarises it to his or her small group counterparts by role-playing how he could use it for a presentation of his current dissertation work.

The last 15 to 20 minutes are used to have students summarise what they want to keep in mind for their own teaching and give feedback about the workshop.

4. Following up the translation project in France through the organisation of an APS-EPP conference on the teaching of psychology

The success of the ongoing translation project and of the workshop led us to the idea of organising a French national conference on the teaching of psychology. The first aim of this conference is to provide an opportunity for psychology faculty and graduate students from all over France

(and from elsewhere in the Francophone world) to exchange information about what is being done in their country to promote excellent teaching. Perhaps of even greater significance, the conference is designed to stimulate a national conversation about what psychology departments and scholarly associations in France can do to elevate the importance of graduate student training in the teaching of psychology.

The conference will take place on 16–17 September, 2016, at L'École de Psychologues Praticiens (EPP) in Paris and will be entitled 'Preparing the Next Generation of French Psychologists: Goals, Methods and Resources for the Teaching of Psychology.' (recherche. psycho-prat.fr/colloque 2016/)

The second aim of the Conference is to publish the proceedings in the French impact factor journal *Pratiques Psychologiques*, which has already published in 2015 a special issue on the teaching of psychology all over the world. This publication will act as the first French resource entirely dedicated to this topic and we hope it will represent an important step in disseminating French scientific research and studies on the teaching of psychology. Further, we hope that the Conference will establish the foundations for regular meetings of French faculty members, students and international colleagues that will support excellence in the teaching of psychology in France and boost innovation through fruitful exchanges of information and ideas.

Joanna Smith, Antenne de Psychiatrie et de Psychologie Légaux.

Dana Castro, Ecole de Psychologues Praticiens.

References

- Adam, A. & Manson, T.M. (2014). Using a pseudoscience activity to teach critical thinking. *Teaching of Psychology* 42, 130–134.
- Beers, Hill, Thompson & Tran (2014). La formation dans l'enseignement de la psychologie pour les étudiants de cycle supérieur: Les compétences essentielles pour les nouveaux enseignants. *Pratiques Psychologiques*, 20, 181–196.
- Bernstein, D.A. (1983). Dealing with teaching anxiety. *NACTA Journal*, 4–7.
- Buskist, W. & Keeley, J. (2014). The Teacher Behavior Checklist. Article written especially for the APS-supported translation project. It is based on Keeley, J., Smith, D. & Buskist, W. (2006). The Teacher Behavior Checklist: Factor analysis of its utility for evaluating teaching. *Teaching of Psychology*, 33, 84–90.
- Carpenter, S.K. (2012). Testing enhances the transfer of learning. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21, 279–283.
- Castro, D & Le Brazidec, C. (2015), *Promoting the teaching of psychology in France: Initiatives and facts*. Presentation to the International Convention of Psychological Science, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 12–14 March.
- Goss Lucas, S. & Bernstein, D.A. (2015). Teaching Psychology: A Step by Step Guide (2nd ed.) New York: Taylor & Francis
- Greenberg, K. (2015). Rubric use in formative assessment. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42(3), 211–217.
- Grünh, D. & Cheng, Y (2014). A self-correcting approach to multiple-choice exams improves learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 41, 335–339
- Khanna, M.M., Badura Brack, A.S. & Finken, L.L. (2013). Short- and long-term effects of cumulative finals on student learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 40, 175–182.
- Larkin, J.E. & Pines, H.A. (2005). Asking questions: Promoting student-faculty exchange in the classroom. *APS Observer*, 18, November.
- Lilienfeld, S.O. (2010). Confronting psychological misconceptions in the classroom, *APS Observer* 23(7), September.
- Miserandino M. (Sept. 1998). Those who can do: Implementing active learning. *APS Observer*, 11(5), 24–26.
- NGuyen, K. & McDaniel M.A. (2015). Using quizzing to assist student learning in the classroom: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42(1), 87–92.
- Norcross, J.C. & Karpiak, C.P. (2012). Teaching clinical psychology: Four seminal lessons that all can master. *Teaching of Psychology*, 39, 301–307.
- Poling, D.A. & LoSchiavo, F.M. (2014). Ten timeless tips for keeping on top of teaching technology. *Teaching of Psychology*, 41, 69–72.
- Richmond, A.S., Boysen, G.A., Gurung, R.A.R., Tazeau, Y.N., Meyers, S.A., Sciutto, M.J. (2014). Aspirational model: Teaching criteria for psychology. *Teaching of Psychology* 41, 281–295.
- Richmond, A.S. & Kindelberger Hagan, L. (2011). Promoting higher level thinking in psychology: Is active learning the answer? *Teaching of Psychology* 38, 102–105.
- Troisi, J.D. (2014). Making the grade and staying engaged: The influence of student management teams on student classroom outcomes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 41, 99–103.
- Yoder, J.D. & Hochevar, C.M. (2005). Encouraging active learning can improve students' performance on examinations. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32, 91–95.