

They think I know a lot- I know very little

While a medical man specialises deeply I am not allowed to do this. I know very little about the subject I teach as it is oceanically vast.

-I have a weak, diachronic awareness of the language I teach - my father-in-law, who translated into French was an eagle in this area.

-I am a "native speaker" of one variety of English, but what do I know of the varieties spoken in Baltimore, Chennai, Singapore or Durban?
Yet I dare to call myself a "teacher of English"

-Though I have done useful work in the field of language teaching methodology I would be unable to offer you a thorough-going survey of the whole field, world wide.

-I sometimes teach people from 20+ languages (mother tongue) and yet my contrastive knowledge of their languages is thin and superficial.

I am water held high in the sky in a dark cloud waiting for conditions to change so I can fall to earth. How I will precipitate I do not know - I could fall in slanting, wind driven sheets or I may become a veil of fine drifting, drizzle.
I am in a state of imminence.

To sum up: I reckon my generalist knowledge of my field is much less encompassing than that of a good G.P.

More important, perhaps, than my knowledge of my subject is my ability to use speedy tools to "learn" my students. In this area I have worked on myself over many years and guess I have passed from apprentice level to that of journeyman. But I have a long road to trudge along on the way to any junior form of mastery, mastery of the sort I have observed in Bernard Dufeu, Earl Stevick and Gattegno.

Dear reader, if you are outside the teaching profession, you may find it odd to be allowed to peep in behind the mask of professionalism, behind the screen any work group protects itself with and realise how relatively inadequate a seemingly self-confident person can feel themselves to be.

Let me be more concrete and give you an example of such perceived inadequacy: a student reads out a lyrically beautiful piece of English to the group but includes a discordant, archaic phrase, should I correct her?

Should I pass?

What is her mood and wish in this regard?

What I did in this case was to suggest some alternatives, linguistically, but I guess this may have broken the spell she cast over her classmates with her lyrical writing. I need to take this problem to my next supervision.

Mario.

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