

Treasure Island Pedagogies Episode 37

Podcast Transcript

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Tünde Varga-Atkins

Hi, this is Tünde Varga-Atkins and this is episode 37 of our Treasure Island Pedagogy's podcast today from the Centre for Innovation in Education at the University of Liverpool. Our light bulb moments, teaching props and pedagogies as we cohabit our Treasure Island, the space for contact amid students. Our three guests today are Denise Sweeney, Feather, Young and James crooning. So let me. Ask you to introduce yourself and say a little bit about where you are and what your original discipline is.

Denise Sweeney

Oh, hi everybody. My name is Denise Sweeney, and I'm an associate professor in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. And I teach on our postgraduate certificate in higher education. My original degree was in drama in French. So I'm one of those exciting arts graduates and I'm very proud of that. And then I moved into teaching English as a second language slash for, you know, foreign language.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. Thank you, Denise, and yeah, Hooray for Arts are graduates and all sorts of graduates. We need everybody, Frederick.

Frederick Yeung

Hi everybody, I'm Frederica Frederick young. I'm from Hong Kong. Actually. I moved to London. Five years ago. And I am a metaph nurse and I have been involved in teaching since 1986. So in general the the teaching I have meant to have students, but when I move here I joined BPP university and then began to teach the mass in healthcare leadership course. And the background for these. Students, mostly they are international students. They have various clinical backgrounds like doctors, nurses, pharmacists. And. The

the the teaching, I actually more from most face to face and the experiences that I have are very exciting and also this is a new challenge to me, yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Really. And yeah, let's see you more in a minute. Thank you, Frederic and James.

James Cronin

Thank you very much. Hello everybody. My name is James Cronin from University College Cork, the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and learning. Where I teach across a range of programmes in the centre, and previously I was involved in adult education and also history of art and history at University College Cork, but my background is in American Catholic intellectual history and also broadcast journalism from Preston University of Central Lancashire in Preston and the UK. And I'm also an honorary. Such fellow at the Department of Information Studies at University College London. So I I bring together a variety of different interests in kind of art, culture, literature. Religious studies as well as teaching and learning and intellectual history. So it's quite a. Thank you.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, brilliant. And and thank you all three for joining us. We love to hear more. So as you know, the first question I will be asking is about sharing your light bulb moment that you had with.

Denise Sweeney

It's an interesting one. In preparing for this, but I think my light bulb moment was around when we're in lockdown and I was working, we had to move our postgraduates to pick course from a sort of face to face. Into totally online and one of the challenges was. Small. Discussion. So when we're in the classroom. The academics would be in small groups and they'd be doing some discussion work. It was very hands on practical teaching session. What I found was that. We were strategies teams, so we started to use breakout rooms and it was getting really challenging because some people found it really hard. First of all, working in small groups and that was from a coaxing linguistic perspective, but also. Working with technology, so we had a real it was a bit like the Marmite thing. Some people really loved it and some people felt it really hard. So that's when I started thinking, what can I do? And I developed using some theoretical things which I maybe talked about. Later,

but was I was started to use Neil Murses exploratory talk as a scaffold and we really talked about that thing around why some groups work and why some don't and and we then we started tweaking in the way that we were. Supporting staff in that process and the rationale of why we were doing what we were doing. So that was really my lightbulb moment.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And what was what were those discussions leading to? So you had the situation where maybe things weren't working as well and you were trying to solve that. So can you talk a little bit about then what happened or what did you notice after introducing these discussions?

Denise Sweeney

Well, I think one of the things that's really hard and I think. Frederick might talk about that with. There are some academics that come who haven't studied in the UK for. They will have particular perceptions and I don't want to either anybody or label anybody, but some people find discussion a waste of time. And they don't want to do discussion. They want you. Just tell me what I've got to do and I'll do the assignment. So I think that thing that when you're in the online environment and some of the challenges of that of being in a breakout group and sort of seeing the relevance. So there's that sort of challenge. So one was actually talking about why do we do? This small group work. What are we trying to do and it is that thing around multiple perspectives and trying to which is one of the things which is sort of why I wanted to come on the podcast is around that thing around. Co constructing knowledge together and that it's not just about what the teacher says and me, an individual and the teacher, my relationship in the learning experience. Just that. Maybe one way instead of even a two way, let alone. A three or five or six way or across the whole cohort. So I think the one of the things was until I made it explicit and really clear that I think before we might have made assumptions. And I think in a classroom you would have put in some anecdotal things through some of the teacher talk. Talk, even though we might have had some stuff about why we do the small group then it was really about well, what does really good small group discussion look like? What is expiratory talk versus say disputational talk and stuff like that. So once I start bringing in some literature. I'm not saying that that groups became more cohesive, but I think that there was a lot more signposting. For academics, and I know that people have used those materials moving on into their own teaching, so that was another thing that was really helpful.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah. Frederico James, do you have any?

Frederick Yeung

I for me, I think I'm well talking about or the online teaching. I think I'm #1 dumb. I actually in the. Long time ago actually used the blended learning, but I don't use much as they like the teams or like use it soon, but until when I was teaching in some teaching during the. COVID. And I found that also I share with Denise all these difficulties, not just some for international student, but also for, I think from for national students also. The engagement, I think it's very, very difficult, but expressive if I'm talking about the international students, the the, it looks like the a lot of times the the way that student learn is quite different. I think I'm because of. Get used. The the way that they are studying. Is mainly to listen and the active participation, particularly if we are talking about the zoom. The active participation I think I do and had a lot of times how to engage the students are really, really difficult and particularly for those if the. English is their second language, so. So I I do share that this is a a very good platform actually for for us to share some of our experiences here. Now for my light bulb moment. I think I'm when is the light bulb moment so it's difficult for me because I think very often I do encourage my colleagues to think about some. Some of the achievements, some of the things that the challenging moments. It happened actually. Not one or two times. It's actually all the all throughout the career, so I. Actually the the the thing I thought when is it is when I started the my teaching. Actually, I'd I I from time that I prepare my lecture materials and I how I interact with these. Builders and all these actually. Some very precious experiences in which I think I learned a lot from from my students and also from my colleagues. And. One thing I think I all along. When I was, I'm teaching the mental health nursing is how actually to teach mental health. It is really difficult in this very abstract and. Something we can't see it. And then what is mental health and a lot of the analysis, reflections or is I, I I I think I'm so. Later, when talk about the. The method the. Experiential learning. I tried a lot. Yes. Yeah. So I think I'll leave it later on to further discuss.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yep, James, what about you?

James Cronin

Thank you. I suppose my light bulb moment. Was and has been. Watching, learning from and teaching with a colleague who sadly has departed, this life,

professor told Ryan, who was a clinician at University College Cork and Professor of Medicine in Canada and I worked with him for a number of years and I learned a great deal about communication from him, particularly in relation to. How he used? Pause and silence as a bridge. Speak. And how he educated. In dialogue, literally looking at the world dialogue as a dialogue, us between words and that exchange between people, he crafted a very nuanced. But complex interplay of words and silence in language. But also he was a gifted. A practitioner, but also an observer of the visual arts, and he would take students to the gallery and ask questions about the. Work that also spoke back to his own clinical practise, where he was trying to educate experts in clinical practise to be members of a team. And his emphasis was always that it should be an expert team rather than a team of experts. And I think that's a really interesting insight that it was that idea of how do you create. Create that dialogue between people that creates good practise and how he did this is he used visual art through. A visual thinking technique where he asked open-ended questions. What do you see? Why do you say that? What more do you? So these are kind of open questions that allowed people to enter into a conversation together to listen to one another, to learn from each other, and then he used that methodology that visual pedagogy. To inform clinical practise and his emphasis was on neonatology, so. He was interested in in very sick babies, but he he wanted his students to focus on the on the baby right and the family that needed to look after. Little infant rather than just thinking about their own technical practise. So it was a brilliant. Learning process, watching him, really thinking about how the visual arts is a form of communication, how you can structure an argument, how you can structure thought and how through dialogue you can. Create that expert team from a team of experts so that to me is a continuous learning moment and I draw on that continuously in my own work in Cork.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Mm. Yeah, that does sound inspirational. And as you're talking through it, you you almost want to be there in that room when you are looking at that. Yeah. And with the baby in the middle. And and I I'm guessing it also lends itself to a holistic way of thinking about. Patients and yeah.

James Cronin

And to conclude that point. Tony would draw on the work of Lee Shulman, who who sadly died recently as well, who was who was one of the important scholars within the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the Carnegie Foundation. But he focused Schulman focused on this idea of educating for the whole person the the hand. The heart and the head at the moment, I

think we focus very much on. The hand or the heart or the head, but we don't see the three totally aligned and and I think that's really interesting in terms of you know communication that communication is about you know language. But it's also about silence. It's about questioning, it's about the the fact of the information, but also the feeling and the tone of the world. But also it's about gesture and Toni and Lee were very good at connecting gesture. To that, and I think that's crucial in in communication and maybe it's something that we need to maybe amplify more it it, that's just an open-ended observation.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I mean, multimodal communication. It sounds like it's really a perfect. This example of that. And yeah, Schumann's signature pedagogies and and I think, yeah, I can understand why that that connection between. And I think what we call with my colleague heart full practises is to tell you can design activities which then also reconnect people to the why you are doing. I mean Frederick you were talking about the and then is I think you were talking about the why we might want to do things. Reconnecting that value. Based in that profession. Contact professional contacts, but yeah, it's in the is there Denise and Freddie in terms of what James is talking about this? Multimodal nature of of educating with various modes of of communication or artefact. Is this something that maybe resonates with you in your areas?

Denise Sweeney

Well, definitely, I think it's really interesting, the head, heart, head, a concept and and how maybe we don't seem to integrate them as as much as we might in learning. I think what's interesting is that what what drew me to to one on the podcast is some research that I'm doing with a colleague, Rupert Knight at at Nottingham. Around RSC. Now Rupert's a primary school teacher, and there's a big RSC Commission that was just published late last year. And I know that RSC is going to be a big part of the primary and secondary curriculum. But what we've been doing is looking at that transition from. Say sixth form or a levels into university and then that transition from university into employment and it's interesting. James, when you talk about that, I mean the work that's inspired me is around the work of Neil Mercer from the University of Cambridge. There are other colleagues that he's worked with like Carol Littlean and Lynn Dawes and Rupert Wiggeriff and stuff, and it is based on that sociocultural. Theory and coming, you know, going back to the Gotsky's work, but he would talk about that thing around. What? He would call. The Intermental development zone and that together we can Co construct knowledge without necessarily having the expert with us. But the

thing that's come out of some of the research, you know, we've only just talked a little bit about it at the society and research in Higher Education conference at just before Christmas. But there's lots of variables around culture, gender. And people's backgrounds that by the time you get to university and it also can be the choice of a levels you do of how competent. And I know I love the word they use around communication, but it's actually speaking, listening and communicating and we have got a really unlevel playing field. And there are people who are going into quite demanding careers. Where those children, young people coming into university don't even have the base. 6IN communication and I've got, you know, because we've interviewed people and had we did some World Cafe workshops, but it's really worrying. But also if you're not very good when you come to university it's very hard to get really good because those opportunities are not there for you. Even if you started going into societies and groups, there is something that we expect people to be fully cooked in some degrees. It's a bit like the sports team, you know, they they will get, you know, there is the F grade. I did play, you know. Think E or F grade basketball at university, but it's like it's they're looking at the A and the B teams in lots of. And that can, you know, I don't want. Hog the conversation, but it's quite problematic and some of it isn't. As a female on a panel is that there are sort of cultural groups where women aren't allowed to talk freely and debate and discuss, and then they're being put into university context where. And I've observed that in teaching observations of in a politics class, and not one of the girls spoke on their own in that. And when I brought it up to the Academy said, oh God, I haven't even. Of that, Denise, they'll talk in small groups, but. To to get up there and and talk in front of the other 30 students in the room. It was quite a it was quite a light bulb moment, actually for the academic because he started to think. Hadn't thought of that so anyway.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

So yes, so we shared some light bulb moments and I think we were inspired by either people or our students to to change our education and teaching. So let's roll together now to our islands to have these more of these moments with our students. So what teaching props or pedagogies would you like to bring in? Boards with.

Frederick Yeung

Yeah, actually I just want to go back to James talking about the the holistic approach and also communication. In fact, I think that in the health. We always, always emphasise this is the. Important. Part in educating our students and so. For the for the teaching method, the. Use. I I think one of the

things that I always emphasise is. The experiences, no matter, is the experiences of the. Lecturers or experiences of the students? I think I'm it's quite. Using that as the platform of the medium to teach. Always. Always. Useful and also. Still, students at times, when they say some, choose to study a profession like nursing or healthcare. Initially, they some students may have some preparations, but some students might not have. So how to get them to actually? A multi way to learn and learn the. Importance the and particularly I think the the understanding themselves as well as the others are important. So the the way in communication how to how to use the communications gives them not. Psychological intervention or these are just day to. And understanding and when we teach about, say, for example, empathy, these sort of things I I think scenarios case studies are those methods that I have used a lot. In helping students to learn.

James Cronin

Mm hmm, I'm just thinking as a prop. What what I might. Is. A book maybe Martin Bubba's eye and. Which I think is in is an interesting it's it's a. It's a kind of an old book now, but I think it's still relevant in the sense that it is thinking about the theory of objectification. In society and thinking about how we become persons to each other in relationship with each other, so how the subject? Becomes subject. In relation to the to the object and why I think that's kind of an interesting concept is because it goes again back to language. I think at the moment. We are sadly at a time, particularly in social media, where you have great polarisation between left and right because of maybe. Language overreach. What I mean by that is that big words are used that often. People feel very crushed by and made small by because language now particularly used online. I think has has a power. Of emotion. That people do feel very frightened by. So one example, and that this is just to kind of clarify what I'm saying. Even if you look today at at how a concept like, say, ceasefire is used, ceasefire implies in many people's minds that this is going to be peace. But in many ways, ceasefire is just. A stalling moment in conflict, literally stopping a conflict for a brief time, and that the underlying level that is war, which is often what people call conflict now. Today they they term it war. But in many ways it's even precise, because war is something that is deeper. And more structural and has more complex. Issues that maybe politicians don't want to engage with fully because of fear that this will affect their their their voters interests. So what I think that may be a duty of educators. Is to maybe try to find new moderate words that can almost act as. A cooling off space. Between the heated exchanges between left and right that seem to be get getting more and more amplified. And I think we need space. For cool. Clear resonance, that is, is not say that in other words, that

the intellectual is is someone who is not adding fuel to the fire but trying to act as an ambassador between these maybe. Very grandiose words that can sometimes be very frightening and very threatening to people. So I'm I'm thinking in that. Of, you know, returning to that idea of what is an intellectual and what is the role of the intellectual, and in that sense going back to, you know, the 18th century notion of the intellectual as part of the Republic of Letters, and that we all as intellectuals. Within teaching and learning, share that commonality that even in times of great crisis, as sociologists now call this the polycrisis that there are lines of peace. That communicate exchange of ideas. And how we signify and know. That is because of the moderate language of the temperate language, which is used by intellectuals to be that traffic between the noise of grandiose language either left or.

Frederick Yeung

Interesting.

Denise Sweeney

I think we've turned out you Harry talking. The the. The proper thing that I was thinking of, similar with James, it was a book and it was. It's Neil's Mercer's book from 1995 and I realised, Oh well, that's like 30 years old, which is called the guided construction of knowledge. And in that thing around, I've mentioned exploratory talk. There are some guidelines around how that might be established, and it's similar to what you're saying. James is that it's not natural where people are sort of interrupting each other and stuff is, but it's things like listening if someone has a contrary point of view than yours that you need to listen, then ask. Around questions so that it's about that. I think you know a few people are saying it's about disagreeing agreeably. And I wonder if. In the old days, where we might have spoken and argued and rhetoric as, yeah, sure, the better that you can communicate your ideas is great. But once text has been. Used in another one than than writing a letter and sending it to someone where there was time from when you wrote it to the time when the person. It the. That we've got this instantaneous text and I suppose e-mail would have been the first one. There were lots of misunderstandings. And miss, you know, sort of misconstruing what is the intent of the writer and people doing that? And I think this is where this thing where the text has taken on another. Meaning now through social media and and the Internet, that is kind of confusing and it becomes perhaps like what you're saying. It can flame that. I think what's also really hard is perhaps. Someone was talking about this about the role of media and reporting of news and opinion, and how that's really blurred now and that becomes problematic where it's not just. Just like the messenger that comes to the

village and speaks out the news like the King is coming. You know, it'd be like, yeah. Then then there's this thing about attitude that comes in the message that because I think is problematic. But it's a really good thing that you talk about because it kind of leads into some of the other things that. Want to talk about when we're on the island?

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And I love this idea of the peace activist the educator, being a peace activist. And how else could we do it? As with the power of language. And I think that's yeah. And that's what I think both of your. Suggestions around using communication? We think about the way you communicate is so important. So so we have done some Co construction through case studies and using our experiences and then looking at the language and our role as educators. In this sense, is there anything else that once we are on the island, we could maybe make use of together? In addition to the ideas that. Either inspired by your ideas now, or things that you think, oh, we could really do with that as well.

Frederick Yeung

I think that the communications, the engagement use of the language one thing apart from the use of the personal experiences of. Students experiences. I think the one one of the things I also use is some storytelling. Yes. Yeah. In in which I think it is a very powerful way to teach. Are using stories and one of the books that I have read is a book written by Jonathan Koshal in 1920. I think 2013 is storytelling animal. How stories make us human. Often it's really. To convince the some some some message. Storytellings, I think it's very powerful too. For for us to use. No matter, teach whatever topic subjects and. It's a good start. It's also a good way for for for engage students in in using. The past experiences critical thinking skills. That's something I think I like storytelling. Stories in classroom were much.

Denise Sweeney

Frederick, I would. To say I mean I'm a I'm a big. Fiction reader and I am a member of a. Club. But what I can say is that they say people that read fiction are more empathetic. And can put themselves in other people's shoes, and that's a good thing. And I know that perhaps in certain, you know, I'm not going to go back the arguments of who might read fiction more than others or whatever. But there is that sort of stuff. So. And I agree with you, I think that'd be great. And that could be that could be. Telling stories as well as

making stories together or or, you know, there can be that thing that it can be a collaborative thing. It doesn't always need to be.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Yeah, I mean, I guess also with James, it's about creating your own narrative.

Speaker

The solemn thing.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Has. Power as well for change or no change, yeah.

Speaker

Yeah, definitely.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

OK, great. So you've been very busy educating others. You need some downtime and relax in your in your off duty time. So what luxury item would you take to the island?

Denise Sweeney

So, well, it's funny 'cause, I think. I wrote on my on the blog little piece, but there's a filmmaker who it sounds a bit pretentious, but there's someone who's always been enduring in my life is a he's a actually Swiss, but people might know him as a French filmmaker called Johnny Goddard, and I discovered him when I was at university. And it was a light, you know, it was just a really amazing thing. And then he's he's done this sort of eight piece thing called Estrada Cinema, which they supposedly in English, we've gotta use the French way because the word *histoire* in French can be narrated, like story as well as history. And it's got an S in brackets, but I did a little bit of a Google search this morning because I wanted to sort of share about it. So it's an 8 part video and I love the work he did where he started using film and video and he is a very political, but he's also.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

I.

Denise Sweeney

His work is just so mad and rich as well. But the one thing about this documentary is that it's using visual and auditory quotations from films, and there'll be some films that people might know but very obscure things. And I can see now how TikTok. And the and Instagram has sort of brought in some of that work. And I mean, he was doing this in the 1980s and it is a labour of love. But I think that what he has and it's got that thing of the novel and the painting. So it was a bit James, when? Talking about. This lovely man that that was working at Cork about art and I'm very interested in the visual image as well. But his work around image and text and the way that he has. Brought so much to the world, even though a lot of people may not know who he is. But there's something definitely. And also bringing in that I think he was one of the first film makers to use video. And you know, so that was that's my luxury item and I'd love to watch the whole, I think it said it says it's a part, so it's maybe not 8 hours, but it's definitely something. And then I'm thinking well, if I can't bring the audio visual 'cause we don't have electronic, there might be a book that someone's done all the stills or something like that I'm sure. Bring it in. So yeah, that's my.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Brilliant. So you had also that eight piece video moving or maybe is all his works on the islands? All watched Gee.

Denise Sweeney

I'd love to take we could have. Great film. So discussing all that, yeah.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Projection. What about you, Frederick and James?

Frederick Yeung

For me, I think are the luxury. Will be sit down and relax and then no marking. Sometimes I think I'm. The luxurious thing is I think they will be the I enjoy very much the the students response feedback. They are. Active and sometimes some of the question if they are quite challenging it, it actually stimulates me.

Speaker

Mm hmm.

James Cronin

So.

Frederick Yeung

I I I think the. Apart from. They do enjoy very much, I think of the. The students actually, apart from the response is is the achievement. If I know and then and this some the students comes back and then and talk to me about, say the progress and also their thoughts and I I think I think it is very. Really, it's not just enjoyable, but at least I stayed at their joy and then share with their feelings. I I think I love that particular being teaching for so long and I think. The the most valuable thing for me is to to see the growth and development of of my students. And also Eve, particularly if they have some impacts in the world, in a society that will be great.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Brilliant. I think we can all all relate to that. The rewards that the students achievements bring. Yes, James.

James Cronin

Yeah, as you as you were speaking, I was, I was returning to in my mind, Frederick's idea of the story, and I suppose one for me one one of the most interesting books in that is Eduardo Galliano's. Book mirrors where he has very **** stories that are historically based, but he builds in contradiction within the story and what that reminds me of, and how can expect a teaching learning is that in Cork? We have a number of visiting Chinese scholars and it's a great opportunity to enter into dialogue with them and of course the the the deep tradition beyond maybe. Political Marxism in in in China, the deeper tradition would be Taoism, Zen Buddhism and. That those traditions that see at story and time as a circularity, as opposed to our Western concept of time, which is kind of very christocentric, which is this idea of technological progression or linear time. And I think that often. Those kind of tensions, I think Galliano brings in the kind of intersection of a linear story with a circularity showing that things are not always one narrative, but they are contradictions with the narrative. And I think that is something that. Again, speaks to the idea of moderation in language. Which stillness and language, but also is a path to healing, recognising the circularity of things, you know that there is evil in good and good and evil, that the two are mixed and it's really hard to disentangle them because they are all circling and that what

we need is moderation. In sinking through this complexity, so Galeano would. B would be someone that I would read on my desert Island definitely.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

And sounds like you've completely also changed the concept of the time on the islands, which I love. So maybe when we answer this island we will all live in this circle of times, whose storytelling and connecting.

Speaker

Yes.

James Cronin

A space.

Tünde Varga-Atkins

Each other. It will be a safe space. Love it. OK. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for for this conversation. I think, yeah, we, we we are revitalised in this concept of new time on the island. So time to sail away to our treasure islands together. Thank you for our audience for listening. If you enjoyed the episode please subscribe to our podcast. You're also welcome to join as a guest our expression of interest form is or our live unci website, where you can also access the book, blog post and the previous podcast episodes goodbye for now, and finally a big thank you to our guest today.

Speaker

Goodbye