****

**We Teach Languages Episode 126: Claire Knowles asks Stacey some Questions from her Methods Class**

 [00:00] [background music]

**Announcer**: [00:00] This is "We Teach Languages," a podcast about language teaching from the diverse perspectives of teachers.

**Claire Knowles**: [00:06] I am Claire Knowles. Today, on Episode 126, I am here with somebody who you may have heard before.

**Stacey Margarita Johnson**: [00:21] If you have ever, ever listened to this podcast before. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [00:26] I am behind the podcast desk today.

[00:29] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [00:29] It's hard for me to relinquish control, Claire.

**Claire**:  [00:33] I have the good fortune of interviewing Stacey Margarita, who is the producer and host of the We Teach Language podcast. I would like to thank you for spending a little time with me today.

**Stacey**:  [00:47] Well, I want to say, in full disclosure, you offered me free stuff.

[00:52] [laughter]

**Claire**:  [00:53] This is true.

[00:53] [laughter]

**Claire**:  [00:53] What I would first like to start with is, can you tell us a little bit about the trajectory that got you to where you are today? Briefly.

**Stacey**:  [01:09] Yeah, because you know I have a tendency to go on, and that was a very open‑ended question.

[01:13] Claire, I was born in California.

**Claire**:  [01:16] OK, could we speed it up to foreign language focus?

**Stacey**:  [01:19] OK. First of all, I am going to go a way back, actually.

**Claire**:  [01:19] OK, that's fine.

**Stacey**:  [01:20] I'll be as brief as I can. I took Latin in high school. I was obsessed with Latin, obsessed with the Roman world. I happened to have an aunt who was very well‑traveled. My junior high school invited my mom and me to go to Spain to visit her, where she was living at the time.

[01:47] I went, thinking I was going to see all the Roman ruins that are in Spain. I got there, and had this intense disorienting dilemma of realizing that I was completely helpless in Spain. The three of us were sitting at a table. I wanted to order my own coke, like it's easy to order a coke, right? The brand name is the same, it's a cognate.

[02:09] I tried to order it with the verb that my aunt had taught me, and the brand name. The waiter could understand neither of those two words, had no idea what I was ordering.

[02:18] My aunt had to talk over me, and they had a little laugh. So sweet, she tried to speak Spanish. But the whole trip was like that, just being helpless, and being unable to connect with people.

[02:27] The Roman ruins were amazing. That was at the end of my junior year, and then my senior high school I started taking Spanish. Then I majored in Spanish in college. I did grad school in Spanish, where I met you.

[02:41] Shortly after my master's degree, I became a community college instructor where my second big thing happened, which is I realized that adults learn things in a special way. I wanted to know more, so I went back to get a doctorate degree, specifically in adult learning.

[02:57] Many, many jobs later, lots of different research interests later, lots of people who've influences my trajectory, but I think those were the two big things that set me on the path of, first, loving language and loving Spanish specifically, second, loving talking about learning and thinking about how adults process and grow and become better.

**Claire**:  [03:19] That's really interesting. The love was there before the fluency was there. You weren't great at languages and were like, "I love this so much."

**Stacey**:  [03:28] I'll tell you what? I was awesome at verb conjugations and noun declensions. I rocked Latin so hard. I also was good at math. I was good at things that you could analyze and break into small pieces. I was your key grammar translation approach student, and I loved it.

[03:46] Then when I went to a place where they actually widely spoke a different language from me...I'd actually grown up in communities that were bilingual to some extent, but I hadn't had much interaction with people who didn't also speak the language I spoke.

[04:02] Understanding that it's so cool that some families speak some languages at home and other languages when they're with me, but then when I found myself in a place where there was no one who spoke the same language as me, I was like, "Well, I'm going to learn Spanish. I'm going to come back here. I'm going to order my own Coke." And I did.

[04:22] [laughter]

**Claire**:  [04:22] What's the leap between...You go to college, you study, you start teaching, you're engaged. Why start a podcast?

**Stacey**:  [04:34] As my career progressed, one of the interesting things that happened was I went from...This is I think in 2006, the first time I taught a methods course. I went from just being someone who taught language and really geeked out about how to teach language, to someone who was teaching one course a year at a local college to people in a K‑12 education program.

[04:58] They were all practicing teachers who were doing alternative certification, and they already felt pretty confident about the practice. They were really doing the methods course to get that systematic knowledge.

[05:11] As always happens when you teach something over a few years of teaching that course just once a year in the summer, I developed a much deeper knowledge of practices, because not only was I getting my take on it from my things that I was reading, but I was meeting weekly with really smart language teachers to talk about what this stuff meant, and hush out the details, and hear about their experiences that were very different from mine.

[05:40] I don't know that they understand that that was happening. I think they were hoping I would be an expert who would tell them about methods. I think that's the expectation, but I was really someone just as a little bit further along who was learning along with them about methods.

[05:56] The job I'm in now, actually I work with graduate students who hope to be college teachers which feels like a really firm bet. That feels like it works. Oh, you asked me about the podcast.

**Claire**:  [06:08] I did.

**Stacey**:  [06:09] Claire knows me well enough to know you can't ask me anything that seems like it might even be a little open‑ended. The position I'm in now, I teach several different methods courses to different populations, and I get to go to conferences all the time.

[06:24] I have friends just in the language‑teacher community. If you guys aren't on Twitter, Twitter is a crazy bountiful harvest of language teacher knowledge, and I've learnt a lot from that community.

[06:36] The one thing I couldn't bring into the classroom was the awesome conversations I was having with teachers. I will try and get guest speakers in three or four times a semester, or we'd Skype someone in, but then that's 30 minutes with that person.

[06:48] Then the next semester I'm like, "Do I exploit them for that 30 minutes of free labor again, or do I find a new person to exploit the semester?"

"[06:58] How many people can I really bring into the class when we have such limited class time? How much class time am I willing to give over to guest lecturers when we really need to be doing the class discussion work?"

[07:10] I felt like I was balancing my different responsibilities as an instructor, and the methods courses. I was participating as a facilitator in a course design institute where we help faculty think about how they can get their students to produce knowledge, and then find an authentic audience for that knowledge.

[07:32] It became very clear to me that my students should be producing interviews with teachers that could then be used by future classes of students. In fact, my students shouldn't just be doing that, but I should be doing that.

[07:49] When I have a guest speaker, I should be recording that audio. I should be saving it for every class that comes after. I should be making it public on the Internet. I should be finding ways to disseminate this knowledge, and not just scheduling the same three guest speakers every semester or whatever.

[08:07] Right away, I knew that was going to be a podcast, so I scheduled a one‑hour consult with our educational technologist.

[08:12] I said, "Please teach me how to make podcasting. How to edit audio. How to use the equipment. I have very, very basic mostly free equipment, and just how to do the basics," because my students are producing good work, and I want to be the kind of person who can make it public.

[08:30] From the beginning, the idea was that I would record some interviews. My students would record some interviews, and we would try and create a community of like‑minded scholars who would eventually also contribute interviews, and try to make it as collective a project as possible to preserve, and disseminate these really intense transformative conversations that I knew we were all having but my students didn't have access to.

**Claire**:  [08:57] I love that, and so much of it resonates with my experience as, I call myself, a professional adjunct. I own the adjunct, so I feel left out of the professional development pool.

[09:10] I don't often get to go to ACTFL because the funding is not there for me. Also because I teach all online, I don't have that whole time passing people, talking to.

[09:24] You are, as my colleague and a friend, these are the conversations that we have, and I just think that having this platform that anybody who...Even if you are full time, you may be the only language teacher. Having a podcast that you can access I think is a really wonderful way to be able to have professional development. Tell me...

**Stacey**:  [09:47] I want to just pause on that just for a second to say it's shameful the reliance on adjunct labor and higher education in the US.

[09:56] Instead of investing in our talented committed faculty, giving them money for professional development, time for professional development, basic standard of living and healthcare, and ability to feed their children, we are saying, "You can get a doctorate degree, then you can work for maybe a couple thousand dollars a course, and if you get sick, no problem. We will just not hire you back next semester and you will have no recourse."

[10:26] It's a crazy system, and just so many of our committed language faculty and higher‑ed fall into that category. You've found a way to make it work, but it's shocking to me that someone of your caliber, with your accomplishments, is trapped in this exploitative system. How dare we collectively? I apologize on behalf of us.

**Claire**:  [10:52] I, within that system, feel fortunate because I am online, and some people do not have the ability to choose where they adjunct. They are limited by their location.

**Stacey**:  [11:03] By geography, yeah.

**Claire**:  [11:04] Yeah. That can be a whole podcast in itself. I would like to move on and I would like to know some of the challenges of starting your own podcast.

**Stacey**:  [11:17] Anyone can put audio into the world at any time. The technological age we live in just really democratized that. There are a few obstacles you have to think through. Podcasting has developed some format formulas that people expect to hear.

[11:36] If you're thinking about developing a podcast, you should probably listen to a lot of podcasts, diverse podcasts, and get a sense of what are the several different buckets of formulas that people are employing and decide which one you think would fit best.

[11:51] I had it really clear that my commute is about 30 minutes a day, 30 minutes in, 30 minutes out. I had it really clear that this was going to be something I could listen to in its entirety on my commute, so no more than about 20 minutes long.

[12:05] I also knew that I want it to be a really regular schedule, and that I didn't want to put an end date. I was hoping it would go on indefinitely.

[12:15] With very little podcasting knowledge, I entered into a commitment with the Internet to be like every week 20 minutes of audio.

[12:23] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [12:23] I wanted to be a producer and help people get their interviews, but not decide for them what was worthy of being on the podcast. I wanted to help cultivate an audience so that other people could benefit from the platform.

[12:39] The first challenge is, you have to know what kind of podcast you want. Are you going to use music?

[12:45] I use a free downloadable public domain song because I didn't have any money or funding. I do this in my spare time. You can also buy a license for a song if you want to have theme music.

[12:58] I have a really Pat intro that we've had the entire...Just put all that stuff in place before I produced the first episode. I also bought a web domain and built a website because there is lots of different ways...

[13:12] The second consideration is, how are you going to get people to listen to the audio? There is lots of different ways. There is a couple of other language teaching podcasts that use Libsyn, which is L‑I‑B‑S‑Y‑N. It's a site that will help you host your audio and send it out on all the proper channels.

[13:30] Another podcast I work with just as a contributor at my institution, we use SoundCloud. That's a really common one. There is lots of platforms that are set up and ready to go. I already had a WordPress blog, a personal one. I felt really comfortable using WordPress.

[13:48] If I bought a particular level of WordPress, it's so much money per year and I can upload audio, and have all my show notes there, and have a lot of control of what everything looked like.

[14:04] No ads, that was super important to me from the beginning. I know a lot of people make money with a podcast, or at least, compensate themselves for their labor with the podcast, but that was not my intention.

[14:15] I wanted to have full control of my site to make sure a third‑party company wasn't placing ads because a lot of those other hosting services you don't have control of the ad run on the web page.

[14:26] That was two so far, right? Then there is a third one is, how are you going to record the audio?

[14:31] I guess you should actually be thinking of that before you build the website. [laughs]

[14:35] I often just use Skype or Google Hangout and a free downloadable program called Callnote. There is lots and lots of programs that will help you record over Google Hangout and just have face‑to‑face conversations virtually with people, record them.

[14:50] Then I download the file and edit it in Audacity. A few months in, I realized every once in a while I was going to have to do a face‑to‑face interview, and so I bought a little Zoom 1 recorder on Amazon that was hugely discounted. [laughs]

[15:08] I have been using it ever since. I take it to conferences and stick it in people's faces and try and get them to do interviews. Then I have some contributors who use their iPhones. Put your mouth close to the speaker‑end of the iPhone and you go for it. It works great.

**Claire**:  [15:23] I think that's wonderful that so many different ways in which you can engage it and choose whatever you want to communicate, whatever you want to put out in the world, you can do it.

**Stacey**:  [15:39] Yeah.

**Claire**:  [15:39] That's fantastic.

**Stacey**:  [15:41] I really think the world needs to hear from passionate people. If you're passionate enough to overcome those hurdles, formulate something, record it, find a way to get it onto the Internet. We needed to hear it.

**Claire**:  [15:55] Do you think that when you first started it, were you worried about it being perfect? Did you want to sound slick? What were the things that were going through your mind the first few weeks as you were putting these things out in the world? Because you're putting yourself out in the world?

**Stacey**:  [16:12] Well, Claire, do you think I thought that stuff through very well before I started? [laughs]

**Claire**:  [16:17] I'm going to say no, but for those listening who might be thinking...I have a really great idea about what I want to put out in the world, what I want to talk about in relation to languages, and culture, and whatever, they may feel...I don't know.

[16:33] Nervous, fear, they may not want to put themselves out there for whatever comes back.

**Stacey**:  [16:41] I did not think any of that through.

**Claire**:  [16:43] OK. [laughs]

**Stacey**:  [16:43] I also didn't expect anyone to pay attention to it. My intention was to serve my ideals that this kind of information needs to be publicly available and open access. I didn't know people would access it.

[16:58] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [16:59] I knew my students would, and I knew by putting it on a public platform, I was making it available to them.

[17:05] I also thought, I have a lot of methods teacher friends, I can convince them to also conduct interviews. I thought maybe people who do my same kind of job in my same kind of context might eventually collaborate with me.

[17:20] The podcast has a little bit more reach than I imagined. I can tell you, right now we have almost 3,000 Twitter followers, which is more than every social media account I've ever had in my whole life put together. I don't track in any way how many downloads or listens we get.

[17:42] It's possible to set that tracking app in the beginning before you start your podcast. I intentionally did not because I tend to go a little bit more towards obsessing over things. I thought, "You know, why do I need to know? It doesn't matter. No one's going to listen, so why do I need to know?"

[18:00] I just didn't set that up. I can track website hits because WordPress...If someone goes to the show notes and clicks on the show notes, I can see that because WordPress collects that data.

[18:11] Every month, listenership goes up and up and up. It is crazy to me how many people are touching our website in a month or in a week.

[18:21] You would imagine that with that kind of reach, there would be a lot of pushback. There might be people pushing back, but they're not tagging me in social media, they're not coming up to me at conferences, or emailing me to push back.

[18:38] What I do hear a lot is thank you. Language teachers, who like me, really could only geek out about language teaching all the time, and are hungry to have these deeper conversations and meet each other and build community. They just are glad to have found the podcast. I'm glad that they become participants.

[19:06] Really just gratitude and love is the only feedback I've gotten.

**Claire**:  [19:09] Do you get a sense for what else...You say you have about 3,000 Twitter followers. What do they want? What more do they want? What are they feeling about where we are right now not just in language education, but when we go and think on a wider context about what's going on in the world? Because we want to contextualize everything.

[19:40] Do you find that they're optimistic about the way we're going? Is there pessimism? Do you get any of that kind of feedback?

**Stacey**:  [19:48] I don't know. I can tell you though that when there are episodes that are about ways to have a more joyful communicative classroom, or ways to be more intentionally equitable and critical when it comes to culture, the listenership just gives us tons of good feedback.

[20:14] There are weeks when there are so many Twitter posts. I work really hard to like, retweet, and respond to every Twitter post because I want people to know that I'm just talking to them every week. I'm so grateful when someone picks up their phone and talks back.

[20:32] But there's definitely a swing where certain kinds of episodes are things we're already struggling with and really speak to us. When we talk about how to make our classrooms joyful and communicative, and whenever we talk about more critical approaches or equitable approaches to teaching culture, I think that's really hot too.

[20:52] At this point, it's hard to tell because I don't really know what I want to say here, but it's something along the lines of, there is a lot of podcasts now. There is a lot of podcasts that are talking about those two issues, specifically, and so maybe each is just what we are always talking about.

[21:12] When my podcast happens to echo what we are already talking about, my podcast joins the conversation, not the other way around. Does that make sense?

**Claire**:  [21:20] It does. I just wanted to ask you to flesh out a little bit, when you say equitable, what does that mean when we're talking about the language question?

**Stacey**:  [21:31] Traditionally, language instruction. I don't want to blame textbooks entirely, although they have a lot of the lion's share.

[21:38] But language instruction has focused on more of a Eurocentric model. For example, deciding what language we're going to teach students and encourage students to use in the classroom, maybe we'll err towards [foreign language] or [foreign language] instead of what students are likely to encounter in their local communities, or what their heritage language speakers in our own programs are using.

[22:09] Just engaging in classicism and racism when it comes to linguistic variety that's considered worthy of being taught. I also think that our textbooks have traditionally suffered from outright racism and misogyny in the images we portray of the target culture.

[22:29] I can think of so many Spanish textbooks I've taught out of, or learned from, where we talked about the concept of machismo or we talked about indigenous people in different countries from a white, affluent lens of pity and disregard.

[22:48] In hindsight, the profession has made so many strides since then, but I know there are still a lot of these materials out there.

[22:57] We're unintentionally using these materials because they're the same ones that were used with us, without critically reflecting on, "What images am I showing my students? What do those images tell my students about the target culture? Who has power here? Who doesn't? Who's worthy of speaking the language? Who's not? Who are we leaving out of this narrative?"

[23:21] In my class, the textbook doesn't have, hardly, any real people in it. It's all made‑up people, and so I bring in biographical sketches of Latinx people from all over the Spanish‑speaking world and in the United States. I work really hard to make sure that I focus on underrepresented groups, because they are bombarded with a Eurocentric narrative.

[23:47] In order to provide counter‑narrative for that, I have to oversample underrepresented populations. Does that make sense?

**Claire**:  [23:57] It does. It's [inaudible] so we are coming on the other side of ACTFL 2019. We have seen, and you have presented on, topics of social justice. How old is the social justice say, at that point?

**Stacey**:  [24:15] I guess, two years.

**Claire**:  [24:16] Two years, which before then, it wasn't there. There has...

**Stacey**:  [24:20] We worked on it for about two years. Then it came to be, and it's been around for two years.

**Claire**:  [24:24] This has been in some of your previous podcasts, the whole aspect of social justice. As somebody who is white, this woman, middle‑class, teaching language, sometimes I feel a certain type of way, what my role is. This is not my authentic voice, kind of thing.

[24:52] I wondered whether you...?

**Stacey**:  [24:54] Right, so I'm not teaching my voice, though. That's an easy one for me. I happen to be the one talking most of the time in my classroom, because my students are novices. They need to hear me talking. Their production is very limited and scaffolded, still normal and expected.

[25:12] But they're not there to learn about me. I am also a non‑native speaker, white, middle‑class American woman, like first gender like everything you said. Yeah, I'm all those things, and they are not.

[25:25] My students are diverse, and they have experiences that I don't know about, that I couldn't imagine. Some that I do know about, and that I want to bring into the classroom. They provide a richness to our group discussions, right?

[25:42] My students are not like me. I am not the point of the class. For language teachers, I feel like we have to make a distinction between I design the curriculum, and I am developing that loving, trusting, almost parental relationship with my students, so that I can provide with access to this target language, right?

**Claire**:  [26:01] Right.

**Stacey**:  [26:01] The class isn't about me. The class is about the communities we're studying. I want to not only decenter me, I want to decenter my students. I push back a little bit on the teacher‑centered versus student‑centered classroom terminology, because I absolutely don't want to center my students.

[26:22] I want to do what's best for them. I want to do what's going to help them acquire language the best.

[26:27] I want to center people who aren't in the room with us, which means when you come up to something that's very different from the way you've experienced the world, your first instinct is to be like, "Ugh, that's weird," or, "That's wrong. Why do they do it that way?"

[26:43] That's an inherently ego‑centric, immature way to look at the world. In the course of a first semester Spanish class, students can develop new habits of mind.

[26:55] Instead of coming across something in the target culture that doesn't match their experiences, instead of having that kneejerk dualistic aversion response, they can mature, use practiced habits of engagement, curiosity, empathy, of de‑centering their own perspective, and really trying to make sense of someone else's perspective.

[27:18] I think that's possible in my class. I hope it's happening all the time. I like to think I see it happening all the time, but I'm very biased. I'm looking for evidence all the time that it's happening. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [27:31] You are alongside your students in this kind of experience?

**Stacey**:  [27:35] There's so many things I haven't experienced. I can't teach them about the target culture, because I'm not the community. I can bring in authentic resources that focus on community members, and give them opportunities to explore the world from new perspectives.

[27:50] At ACTFL, we heard this really inspiring closing ceremony keynote today. One of the things he emphasized was helping students connect through music. I was like, "Yeah, we've had so much fun with music this semester."

[28:06] I can bring in music that is a genre they feel very connected to. It feels already comfortable for them and then realize, "This is happening entirely with a Colombian sensibility, in Spanish." I can help you decipher the language and make the language accessible, so that you can enter into this entire new world of music.

[28:29] One of my students told me the other day that after we listened to like a Maluma song in class, that she downloaded a whole bunch of reggae tone music on her whatever thing they listen to music on...iPhone.

[28:42] She's running to reggae tone now, because the beat is so great. I'm like, "OK, she's not understanding what she's hearing." Outside of what's required for class, she's engaging and feeling part of, feeling membership in this culture, that previously was closed off to her. It wasn't available. It's for me, a huge win.

**Claire**:  [29:06] I love that so much, because I think sometimes we can feel a little bit anxious about aspects of culture where we don't really know, we're not part of. Trying to communicate that to students without taking it over, or make it inauthentic. There's lots of feelings about that.

[29:27] In the same way that our students have a lot of feelings about where they are within their language learning and how to express themselves, and how to talk about issues, sometimes it's uncomfortable.

[29:39] Sometimes, we just have to be uncomfortable to get to talk about issues that are really important, but sometimes...not to repeat myself, uncomfortable. They're important.

**Stacey**:  [29:48] That's one of the core principles of the book, "Courageous Classrooms," which I was introduced to through my co‑presenter, L.J. Randolph, is you're going to experience discomfort.

[30:03] That's part of this intense learning experience is it will be uncomfortable. Just know it's coming. When it comes, actually be present in that. It's not a negative.

**Claire**:  [30:14] Yes. We were talking about that today, about discomfort. It feels negative, but that doesn't mean to say it's a negative thing. That's our reaction to it.

**Stacey**:  [30:28] Yeah. We were talking about that in the context of something completely unrelated to work. As an adult, you have to figure out which of this is pain, and which of this is growth. Healing hurts, but so does breaking. Immature people can't tell the difference.

[30:47] Our students can overcome that lack of experience. They can learn to distinguish between healing and breaking, and learn to just be in the discomfort of growth.

[31:03] I really like a lot of the things that you do in your class, Claire, are really focused on helping students understand the political and historical realities of the countries we're studying. In my first semester in novice class, I really, really focus on people and engaging with individual people in these communities.

[31:25] I'm not teaching second semester these days, but in the past, when I did, I shifted to a more global historical perspective, because all of a sudden, they could start using the past tenses, so it felt like it was OK to do that.

[31:39] In your class, if a student takes a first and second semester course with you, when they leave, they can read an article about what's happening in Bolivia right now and understand some of the political and ecological implications of that, which is intense.

[31:55] You can read the news from around the world and feel like I understand why that's significant.

[32:01] I might not know that person's name, because I'm not up‑to‑date on who's in power in this country, or even what their system of government is, I don't really understand the details, but I can understand how this might impact the lived experiences, the ecology, the humanitarian situation.

[32:19] I can get a sense for what the people in that community are experiencing based on this new story I'm reading.

[32:25] There are people who go through whole Spanish majors and can't understand what's happening in Bolivia right now, because they've read literature and they've learned language, but they haven't connected that with the lived experiences of the people in the countries we're studying.

**Claire**:  [32:41] Absolutely. Instead of othering that, to be able to think, "How does that relate to me, and what things are happening here in my life where I can draw connections?" There always is connections. We are so much more the same than we are different. To wrap things up...

**Stacey**:  [33:06] Are we already?

**Claire**:  [33:07] [laughs] We've only been talking for ages.

**Stacey**:  [33:11] It's 40 minutes.

**Claire**:  [33:12] [laughs] Where do you see ‑‑ and I don't know whether to just say the podcast in five years, or whether to do a more global where do you see the state of foreign languages in five years? It feels a little...

**Stacey**:  [33:32] Let's do the first one.

**Claire**:  [33:32] It feels a little complicated because there's...Where do you see...

**Stacey**:  [33:37] Actually I'm going to touch on both of those, because you know me.

**Claire**:  [33:41] Yes, I do.

**Stacey**:  [33:42] Let's start with the field as a whole. Five years ago, if you had told me that a third of the sessions at ACTFL '19 in DC would be related to representation, social justice, critical perspectives, on and on, I would have told you that was crazy and there's no chance, but you had multiple options around those themes.

[34:08] Sustainability, mindfulness, social‑emotional learning, like students with disabilities. If you care about connecting with people and representing people, and making language a truly inclusive endeavor, you have multiple options at every hour. It was just beautiful.

[34:26] I also got to go to a lot of sessions by people who had identities that were very different from mine, which is always a benefit when you get to interact with people whose backgrounds and identities bring something different that's always wonderful.

[34:42] I'm hoping that I can't even imagine in five years what things will be like, because I couldn't have imagined this five years ago, but definitely I feel like the field is moving forward.

[34:54] Let me balance that optimism with some reality. You and I were just talking earlier about...There's some ways like remarkable progress, and in other ways, we still have all the same underlying problems.

[35:14] Optimism, but still the reality of the violent system we live in is still there, so how do we think about five years from now?

[35:25] I have wild optimism that I can't even imagine how good it's going to be, but I also think with that every single person, all hands on deck, with a radical commitment to love. That's what language is. It's teaching people how to communicate using the words, the nonverbal communication, the pragmatics.

[35:44] It's teaching people how to approach someone new, engage in a relationship with them, and make them feel safe and loved when they're with you so that you can actually have true communication develop from that. Language teachers do amazing work. The juxtaposition is hard for me to make sense of.

**Claire**:  [36:04] Especially as a lot of institutions are seeing the less popular languages being cut from programs and that they're facing a lot of challenges.

[36:17] Why we see ways in which we are focusing more on languages not just as a means to communicate with somebody who speaks that language, but what are the skills that being able to understand not only a different language but a different perspective, a different culture, being able to sit across from somebody who lives a different life, who speaks a different language, practices a different religion, whatever it may be, and find commonalities?

[36:48] We see now with the social justice and all these other elements and all these other voices that it feels like now we can really promote languages not as foreign, but as a way in which to understand each other and communicate with each other regardless of where you're coming from.

[37:11] Yet, at the same time, there's forces that are limiting our ability to do that because they're reducing our classes. It feels like it's a real tipping point about now that we feel like I can really make a difference, and we can make all these connections, but at the same time...What do we do? Is it still a place of optimism?

**Stacey**:  [37:36] No. I feel optimism when I think about like‑minded teachers gathering for conferences and the work that we're doing in our classrooms. I feel optimism when I look at my children. But in the last three years, 651 foreign language programs have been cut at US colleges.

[38:00] 651 foreign language programs no longer are there. These are colleges all around the country that are letting their faculty go, that are just closing up shop and telling students to do business majors. That's a stunningly high number.

[38:19] There is reasons to be incredibly optimistic that you can't imagine how good things will be in a few years. There's also reasons to feel like, "But what about all of our resources, what about the legitimate violence of the system that we live in?"

[38:34] I say this all the time, and I know it sounds really cheesy, but I really believe that the only solution is committed action. We are not responsible for fixing things, we're just responsible for standing up to the bad stuff.

[38:49] I know that presenting my students with a Eurocentric, paternalistic, misrepresentative picture of the Spanish‑speaking world is fundamentally immoral, and so I have to not do it.

[39:07] I have to keep reminding myself that my job is to help give my students the cognitive tools to overcome their own innate disposition towards rejecting things that are different, and to learn how to build bridges and to recognize the beautiful things that are happening in other communities and honor those.

**Claire**:  [39:29] Absolutely. We talked about that feeling of discomfort. It does feel uncomfortable, and for some teachers it's more than that. It's their livelihood, it's their careers, it's their jobs, it's the way in which they feed their family.

[39:45] For other people, the fact that they're cutting these programs, that's their like livelihoods that have gone, but within this discomfort we can have despair, or we can be galvanized, and we can spread the word why language education is important.

[40:05] I think that's why even where we are with the programs being cut that we can say, "Actually, this is what we need in order to change what we're doing to make what we're doing relevant, and to stand up together and move forward," because ultimately, it makes better nation, and make our children and our children's children's lives easier.

**Stacey**:  [40:34] I hope so.

**Claire**:  [40:36] I teach a methods course. I have five students, and I'd asked them to take a look at some of the podcast episodes, pick one that they were drawn to, give a little background about it, what they learned, and then they all added a question to their blog posts, and they were interested in your feedback.

**Stacey**:  [41:01] That's exciting. Let's go. I don't usually get to talk to people about the podcast unless they're on Twitter.

[41:08] [laughter]

**Claire**:  [41:08] This first question is from Anna Otto. She teaches Spanish, and she listened to the "Social Justice and Representation" podcast with L.J. Randolph.

[41:25] Her question was, as a Spanish teacher and a social justice warrior, she wondered how can she best incorporate social justice into a classroom and what is your advice for incorporating social justice into Spanish one classroom with novice low students, so it's three‑partite.

**Stacey**:  [41:47] LJ and I presented two days ago at ACFTL. Two weeks before that, we presented at the Tennessee Foreign Language Teaching Conference, and if Anna had come to our two presentations, every one of those questions would have been answered in great detail.

[42:04] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [42:04] My instinct is always to say everything I know on a topic when answering a question, so I want to avoid the whole, let me just repeat to you everything LJ and I said.

[42:17] To be honest, LJ and I have written a couple of papers together that cover a lot of the topics, so I'm going to put links to where your student can find those in the show notes.

[42:29] Specifically our most recent paper we cowrote is "Open Access." Anyone who has the Internet can read it, but I'm going to start at the bottom.

[42:38] Incorporating social justice with novices, I'm teaching a 101 course with novices this semester. What I'm really focusing on is not more critical perspectives on social justice, but just representation.

[42:53] Claire, you and I have actually been working on this for a long time. We can't do everything in a first or second semester course.

[43:01] We definitely can't solve anything, but we can touch on every important topic, so just we have to think what's feasible in the time we have, what makes a strong connection in the language and culture, and what's going to plant seeds that might bear fruit later.

[43:16] In my class, I have chosen to focus on representation. A lot of my students come into the classroom, and they don't understand that you can be Asian and Latino. They don't understand that you can be black and Latino.

[43:30] Racial and ethnic identity in the Spanish‑speaking world, and I believe a lot of that reason is because of that overwhelming bombardment of media messages we get in pop culture or in our everyday lives about what a Spanish speaker looks like, what their accent sounds like, what kind of clothes they wear, where they're from.

[43:51] The phenomenon of equating the word Mexican with Spanish speaker...Anyway, there's so many threads in there we could down. I'm not going to go down any of them.

[44:04] From my novice classroom, I highlight people who have achieved great things, or who are fighting inequality, or who are heroes in their communities, or who are just famous.

[44:16] If you're going to get to know Spanish speakers, you're probably going to want to know who these key players in this current zeitgeist are. We talk about musicians and artists, and I specifically look for famous people who represent a variety of different identities, and I don't overemphasize the identity.

[44:43] I just want, by the time my students leave my first semester class, for it to seem so normal that a Cuban person named Yat‑Sen Chang is the principal dancer at the London Ballet. By the end of the first semester course, that should be like a non‑issue.

[45:00] We've seen his name, we've seen him dance. They know who he is, and it's just feels like a thing that totally happens in Cuba all the time. Why would that be shocking?

[45:08] You wouldn't be surprised at all to hear there was an American man named Yat‑Sen Chang. You wouldn't be surprised to hear there was a Chinese man named Yat‑Sen Chang. Why would we be surprised to hear there was a Cuban man with the same name?

[45:19] A lot of my students are the first time they meet him. Reintroducing a variety of identities, gender identity and racial identity, ethnic identity, sexual identity, trying to touch on as much of the diversity that exists in the Spanish‑speaking world so that later, when we may be in future semesters they dig into some medior topics, they don't have to overcome that initial hurdle of who are Spanish speakers.

**Claire**:  [45:48] I really like that, the one thing that you said that we always say to each other, "We are planting seeds."

**Stacey**:  [45:54] We are planting seeds.

**Claire**:  [45:57] Explain that a little bit.

**Stacey**:  [45:58] Sometimes it's frustrating for teachers who are interested in justice and super highly aware of the injustice to think we have to do as much as we can all the time, and we have to see results, feels that our lives depend on it.

[46:15] Definitely, there are people in the world right now whose lives depend on us doing the hard work like antiracist education. If you push, push, push, and demand to see results, you're actually going to undo a lot of that good work.

[46:30] Our job as teachers is to plant the seed, plant the idea, but seeds don't grow overnight. Results don't show up overnight, and actually the process of growing and changing...

[46:45] If you have racist ideologies that you have inherited from the world around you that you didn't choose them but they're part of your environment, and then you come into a class that challenges those, that's going to be a painful, uncomfortable experience for you.

[47:02] People can only handle so much pain and discomfort before they disengage, so part of the work is understanding your job isn't to finish the work or to force the results, but to plant the seeds, stem the seeds, nurture the seeds, and trust that good things are going to grow, and that there's going to be other educators after you who are going to pick up the work and take over from where you left off.

[47:26] Oftentimes honestly that feels very hard, and there's also a good case to be made for sometimes we need to be pushing harder, not be so subtle and tiptoeing around some of these issues. That's the end of my sentence. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [47:44] I like that, and I think especially for teachers within the K‑12 to hear us ‑‑ we teach in higher education ‑‑ for them to know that they are starting the work, and there are people who will take the batons and continue that work. It's heartening.

[48:05] A little bit of the pressure is taken off because all they have to do is plant it. There are other people out there and more and more teachers who are doing the nurturing as they go along.

**Stacey**:  [48:17] If ACTFL is any indication, it's an overwhelming number of teachers who want to do the work and are seeking out how. For me, the very first entry point is representation in the curriculum.

**Claire**:  [48:32] Fantastic, fantastic. This segues nicely to José‑Luis Franco. He teaches Spanish, and he is also interested in authentic material, real‑life experiences.

[48:50] For some instructors this can be difficult to include in the classroom. How can an instructor that does not have the resources to take their students abroad and find and incorporate authentic material and real‑life experiences? How can they do that cheaply or for free?

**Stacey**:  [49:11] Don't spend any money on authentic resources. Use the free Internet. For instance, a really amazing resource for authentic materials is social media.

[49:29] Authentic materials don't have to be professionally produced materials from a Hollywood studio or from a Colombian studio. Authentic resources means that these are resources that have an authentic communicative purpose that give students some insight into actual community language use.

[49:50] Good news is there are millions of young people, people of all ages really, tweeting and instagramming and snapchatting constantly, all the time, and so whatever your social media platform of choice is, if you do a search for some keywords related to the thing you know you're going to be talking about in class...

[50:11] For instance, if we're having a conversation in class about what we did over the weekend, I can bring in so many authentic voices of people about my students' age in different countries talking about what they did over the weekend, because teenagers post about what they did on the weekend all the time.

[50:31] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [50:31] Authentic resources, we sometimes get the idea like, "Oh, this has got to be a film," or, "I have to go get a travel brochure from the Alhambra and bring that back from my travels.

[50:44] Pre‑Internet that was what authentic resources were. We hoarded them, we were so careful not to lose them, we laminated every menu we ever had, but it's not like that anymore. There is a whole Internet full of Spanish speakers talking about their experiences, and this connects back to the social justice question, too.

[51:05] You get to choose which experiences you're going to highlight, who those people are, where they live, what their lives are like. You get to help your students find connections and explore some differences.

[51:16] I forget the rest of the question. Was that the whole thing?

**Claire**:  [51:23] How to give them that real‑life experience? I think the social media, because it's very current...although I would also say, when collating these things ‑‑because all of sudden, once you start doing this, you're collecting it ‑‑ is to organize it and file it.

[51:39] You may want to do a search each year, or each term, or each semester. But there may be some resources that you want to use again. Bookmark it, save it. You and I both have had the experience where we go round the house, "Remember that thing that you told me...?"

**Stacey**:  [51:54] Yeah, that's the thing. Where's that video, with the Mexican woman who makes the chocolate by hand, and it's like a three‑minute video? It's super accessible, and I've looked for it for three years. Now I can't find it.

**Claire**:  [52:04] That's exactly right. [laughs]

**Stacey**:  [52:05] Yeah. That's an actual video I've never seen again that I have regretted my whole life.

[52:11] Let me also mention about authentic resources that if you're going to bring authentic resources into the classroom, one thing that I think can be really detrimental to the use of authentic resources is to treat them like museum pieces.

"[52:24] Now, we are going to examine the exotic writings of this..." It's not any different than the words that your students in the class are saying. You're just bringing new voices into the conversation, particularly with social media, where we're talking about people we've never met but are real people just posting about what they had for lunch.

[52:46] Instead of thinking of this as, "This is an object lesson. This is a piece in a museum. We're going to do a write‑up about it," actually engage with it like it's someone you're having a conversation with. Help students understand the message. Help students think about how they would respond to that message if it were their friend posting that.

[53:06] Have your students borrow some of the text in the social media post to think about, what would they write, using a similar format but including their own lunch menu. Just engage with that piece in similar ways to what you would do with other kinds of texts and with other social media posts in your real life.

[53:29] Think about how to use those pieces to generate more conversation in the classroom, but not to essentialize or exoticize the people who are posting.

**Claire**:  [53:40] Sure, that makes sense. I like this idea of taking some of that text, perhaps, and recreating it so students can use that in order to express themselves. I think that's great.

**Stacey**:  [53:54] Yeah, and express themselves in really, really culturally and age‑appropriate ways, right?

**Claire**:  [53:59] Right.

**Stacey**:  [54:00] This is a 17‑year‑old in Puerto Rico saying what she did over the weekend. You did almost the exact same thing, what do you need? How can you borrow this text and start to internalize this language to express very similar ideas?

**Claire**:  [54:15] All of a sudden, like you said, the language is real life. These are actual people. It's not a textbook.

[54:23] José really liked the podcast about the "Afro‑Mexican Stories" with Michelle Nicola. He liked that because he has a lot of African American students in his class. That relates to what Anna said, as well.

**Stacey**:  [54:42] Let me also add another L.J. Randolph quote. The Tennessee Foreign Language Teaching Association meeting where we spoke out a couple of weeks ago, he mentioned that "Sometimes your curriculum is a window that helps you look into other experiences. Sometimes, your curriculum is a mirror that helps students see themselves in the curriculum."

[54:59] One thing that the foreign language curriculum in the United States has suffered from in the entirety of my lifetime is if you do not have a Western or Northern European identity, you're probably not going to see yourself represented in the curriculum.

[55:19] I think this is one of the tragedies of our profession. It is something that doing things like acknowledging that there's a lot of diversity in Mexico that's unexplored, because of the over essentialization of who Mexicans are and what their experiences are. Mexico suffers from it.

[55:46] Allowing, even if Afro‑Mexican experiences aren't a large part of the Mexican experience, they're a large part of your students' experience.

[55:56] Helping your students see that there are people like them around the world, whether it's racial identity, or gender identity, or socioeconomic situation, there are people like them that are speaking Spanish, black people speak Spanish around the world who look very much like them. That's a wonderful thing to show your students.

[56:22] I'm glad that that episode is useful. I know that Michelle, who did that research with the Fulbright, is putting a lot that stuff up on her blog and working on how to get those Afro‑Mexican stories out into the world, so that more Spanish teachers can freely use and fully incorporate into their classes. Definitely keep an eye on that author.

**Claire**:  [56:45] That's fantastic. We're going to move to Dylan Lyra. He teaches Japanese. He listened to the episode called, "Who Should Be Talking?"

**Stacey**:  [57:01] That was me. I did that episode. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [57:05] Then that's excellent. You'll know a lot about it.

**Stacey**:  [57:12] Yes. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [57:13] Lyra then asks if, with the advent of a student‑centered approach, he was wondering about the effectiveness of having one of the students who is seeking enrichment ‑‑ they want a little bit more from the class ‑‑ to lead a discussion entirely in their target language.

[57:40] He wanted to see if a class where the student could be the teacher. He would be there to help facilitate the leadership and provide instructions on how to lead. By taking one of the stronger students out of the output and having them in the input, he wondered, "How much more engaged would the rest of the class be?"

**Stacey**:  [58:06] I think he should try it and report back. Maybe he should record it as a podcast episode and send it in.

[58:13] There's no way for me to know. I don't know what level his students are, I don't know what their personalities are like, I don't know what his facilitation style is. There's so many variables. There's no way for me to possibly know.

[58:25] In general, good teaching is students feel like they're being challenged enough that it's interesting, they're being supported enough that they're not overly frustrated, they're seen and they see other people, they're known and they know other people, they're getting to know the reality of the Japanese speaking world and not some Americanized navel‑gazing version of it.

[58:55] I think none of the principles that I just said conflict with that idea at all. I can't see why it wouldn't work with a more advanced class.

[59:06] I can tell you that from my novices, if I were going to hand over the teaching...I do have a pretty teacher‑focused class. I do a lot of large group activity where I'm primarily doing the talking. If I were going to hand that role over to one of my students, it would have to be a more advanced student because we're novices. It would also have to be in very concrete, formulaic ways.

[59:34] If there's an activity that we do...For instance, I have this opening slide that I start every class with. It takes a good 10 minutes to work through it, but there's a lot of pieces to it, and the students are comfortable with the process.

[59:49] I could see me saying, "OK, instead of me asking the questions about the opening slide, you've done this every day for five weeks. You kind of know how it works, so I'm going to hand it over to you and let you be the one."

[60:01] I would still have all the things the student needs to ask written out, but let them stand in the front and actually do the facilitation of the asking and the answering, but in a limited time with support.

[60:13] Only pick students who volunteer for that role. That would even work in my class and my students aren't advanced. I would be interested to hear how that goes.

**Claire**:  [60:22] They don't have to lead the entire lesson. Like you said, it could just be a small part.

**Stacey**:  [60:29] Also, there's another podcast called "Inspired Proficiency." I know Ashley who hosts that podcast often has talked about how she has her students do a teacher for the day activity, which is, I think, mostly leading games if I understand correctly.

[60:46] Honestly, you need to talk to Ashley. I don't want to speak for her.

[60:49] If there are things that you do well enough that your students know the routine and you feel like they could step in and do that, I don't see why that wouldn't work.

**Claire**:  [60:57] There you go, Dylan. We are going to wait for your podcast.

**Stacey**:  [61:02] [laughs]

**Claire**:  [61:02] Send it in to Stacey. She'll edit it. It would also be interesting to hear from his students how that went.

[61:11] The thing is it doesn't all have to be positive. There's as much value in where it didn't go right, what were the challenges, as much as what did go right.

[61:24] Other teachers, it's interesting to you and, therefore, it's going to be interesting to other people out there. Do it, record some interviews. Send it in to Stacey, and I think that...

**Stacey**:  [61:38] If you teach minors though, I don't want your interviews. I only want people who can sign a waiver themselves.

**Claire**:  [61:43] OK, so there we go.

**Stacey**:  [61:45] If you interview your students, then tell us what they said. But don't put them on an audio, because I don't know about the legal ramifications of that.

**Claire**:  [61:55] Or look into the legal ramifications and then you can send it in. All good stuff, all good stuff.

[62:03] OK, we are now going to go onto another one of my students. She teaches Spanish, Carolina Kintana.

[62:13] She had a question about technology. She listened to "Tech Tools for the Language Classroom."

**Stacey**:  [62:21] Ah, with Heidi Trude.

**Claire**:  [62:23] Correct, because she feels like she needs to integrate more technology. There was a lot of resources there for her to use. Her question is actually not related to...

**Stacey**:  [62:36] Oh, good. I was about to say, Claire, I actually don't use much technology in my teaching. Maybe you should answer this question, because you're an instructional technologist. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [62:49] Right. She works in a very safe and exceptional school. But when she's sharing her experiences with her colleagues, she's finding that their circumstances are different. They're facing violence, destructive situations.

[63:06] How can you create a positive teacher‑student relationship in this type of context? Can you?

**Stacey**:  [63:13] Yes.

**Claire**:  [63:13] How can you teach when you do not have any access to technology? I guess, technology at the end. They're two very different questions.

**Stacey**:  [63:22] OK, Carolina. I'm going to start with the technology, because that's easier.

[63:19] You don't need technology to be a good teacher, because language is about love and trust. Language is about really seeing the person whose eyes you're looking into, really focusing on what they're saying, and what it means.

[63:40] Not just the words but the intention, and the message, and the connotation, and the context. Language is about really understanding someone's mind and someone's heart through the messages that they send you, and then sending messages back in return.

[63:59] If you have more than one person in a room, and you're willing to look into each other's faces and communicate messages, you can learn language.

[64:09] There are ways that we can make it a lot better, like I don't use much technology in the classroom. I do use a projector. I do use it to project little stories I've made up, or to do the biographies of notable Latinos, or to project off of degree sources, like videos.

[64:28] We look at a lot of YouTube videos, like music, interviews, and things like that. I do use technology, but even if I didn't have it, I still have 15 college students in a room who can listen to what I say, think about it, turn to each other, talk about it, write their thoughts down. We still have all the tools we need to do good language instruction.

[64:52] I would say it's OK to go high‑tech and technology can be fun. It's also OK to use no tech at all, and just say, "What are the basics of human connection? How can I foster that for my students?"

[65:05] Now, the more difficult, but strangely related question about how do you connect when your school is unsafe, or when there's a constant threat of violence, it also boils down to connection.

[65:22] I have not had to teach in an environment where I felt unsafe. I started my career at a community college, and some of the night classes I taught were with students who, they weren't violent students, but they were overly stressed students, who had very chaotic lives.

[65:41] Their reactions to things weren't always predictable, and I didn't always feel like I was making that connection the way I wanted to. I'd back up a little bit, but I haven't felt physically unsafe.

[65:56] I don't want to overstep my bounds, because this is not my area. But I do want to encourage Carolina and anyone else who's listening, to think about what scared feels like, and how people act when they're scared.

[66:12] Our frontal cortex gives over control of our brain to our amygdala and we go into panic mode. We're not thinking clearly. We're not making those logical connections. We are in a fight or flight mode.

[66:30] When you have students who live in fear, you should expect that they are going to be very angry, and ready for a fight. Literally, their chemical's pumping out of their brain, telling their bodies, "This situation is dangerous. You have to be ready to fight your way out of it, any minute."

[66:48] Or I would expect to see students who are very withdrawn, trying to stay under the radar, trying very hard not to make an emotional connection with anyone. Their bodies are telling them, "You have to hide. You have to get out. You have to be ready."

[67:03] Once again, not fight your way out, but hide your way out, right? I would not expect to see students who are sitting up straight, looking forward, ready to learn, laughing, enjoying each other's company, making human connection...

[67:18] When your panic takes over, when your fear takes over, that's a biological response, not a behavioral choice.

[67:27] I would ask people to keep that in mind. I also think that we know a lot about how to diffuse those feelings. Some things that help are playful engagement.

[67:37] Is your classroom a place where people can relax, feel like things are low stakes? There's not high consequences for everything? It's not compliance‑driven, it's joyful. That's one play for engagement, diffuses that feeling.

[67:53] Another one is conscious attention to sensory experience, which is a lot of mindfulness. Thinking about what can you see? What can you smell? What can you hear? What can you taste? What's happening in your body? What actual physical sensations are you feeling?

[68:12] Focusing on your breath. Just being silent for a moment, enjoying stillness. Mindfulness techniques are gaining popularity really quickly in classrooms. I think the reason is because they help diffuse some of that fight or flight response that scared students exhibit, and we need that.

[68:32] I'm sure there are more. I'm not an expert on this topic, as well. So many topics I am not an expert in. What I do think is that many teachers approach those fight or flight behaviors.

[68:44] Many parents, many teachers, many of us just as people in the world, when we encounter fight or flight behaviors, we interpret them as angry, violent behaviors, or disengaged behaviors. Disconnected, disengaged.

[68:58] I would just ask you to change your mind set a little bit. When you see a student who's behaving in a way that suggests fight or flight, think about, "What can I do to help lower the adrenaline, lower the panic?"

[69:13] Maybe engage them in some playful engagement or some mindfulness so that they realize, "This is a safe place. I am safe here. I'm not going to have to fight my way out."

**Claire**:  [69:26] Absolutely. Relate what you said about relationships being seen and seeing. For a lot of students I worked in a high school, we had 35 students. I have 34 desks and the longer I was there, it was the relationships.

[69:45] It's difficult, because it also requires a lot of mental energy from teachers, which is why teachers get burnt out. Because in order to establish those relationships, you have to put a lot.

[69:58] When you said these things that they display are not attacks on you personally, and so being able to push through that, is mentally exhausting.

[70:10] Showing that you can mete it to these relationships with these kids, also goes a long way. It's a lot of things going on that it's not an easy, quick solution stuff.

**Stacey**:  [70:21] It does start with a mindset shift. If a student comes up to me and he's like, "This is crazy. I hate this class. I hate you. I can't believe you gave me this grade. This is ridiculous," cursing at me, calling me names, my first instinct is, "Back off."

[70:38] [laughter]

**Stacey**:  [70:39] You are too close. This is not OK. I am the authority figure. I'm going to put you in your place." That's my natural reaction to someone getting in my face. Really, over the years, as a parent and as a teacher, I have thankfully not retained that natural impulse that my body has.

[71:03] I have been able to change my first reaction to, "What is this person experiencing that would make him so scared, right now, that they're willing to put themselves in what is essentially a very dangerous position, where they could lose their education and they could lose their status in this class?"

"[71:23] They're willing to sacrifice a lot in order to have this confrontation. That's a last resort. This is a desperate person." To say things like, "I hear that you're extremely angry and I am sorry for that. What can I do, right now, that will help you feel like we are on the same team, and that we're going to sort this out together?"

[71:51] I don't work in any one of those environments, but I'll tell you what, I do work in a school with a lot of very, very high‑achieving students. They're also constantly panic‑stricken.

[72:02] If you work with high‑achieving students, you might hear things like, "They are grade‑grabbers and if you give them a 93 instead of a 96, they will want to speak with your manager." You hear a lot of these same sorts of stories, like urban legends about the acts of violence of high‑achieving students.

[72:22] When I see that, I think, "How much panic and utter despair does a student have to be in if they think a low A is so high‑stakes that they're willing to break their relationships with the people who are the gatekeepers in order to confront you about this?" This is a level of panic that I had never experienced over my grades.

[72:47] Telling them, "I can see that you're panicking about this grade and that was not my intention. For me, grading is feedback, and I wanted you to know exactly where you had room to do better next time. Can we sit down? Can I get you a cup of tea? Can we talk about why this grade is so important, and we'll see what we can do to make sure that this semester is a win for you?"

[73:09] So many people walk through life terrified. Acknowledging that and being on their team is a huge amount of emotional labor. It's not fair that we have to do all that labor. It's not fair that the students are under this fear all the time, but do you want them to learn or not? Because terrified people can't learn.

**Claire**:  [73:28] Excellent. OK, and we're going to move to my last student, Gretchen Stricha, and she teaches Latin.

**Stacey**:  [73:39] Ooh, my mom's a Latin teacher.

**Claire**:  [73:41] [laughs] She was really interested in spoken Latin. This is an area that she would like to introduce more of into her own classroom, and is looking for ways to do it. She had three questions for you.

**Stacey**:  [74:05] Can we do them one at a time, though? Because I think every other group, I have only answered some of the questions, because I start with the last one and then can't remember the first one.

**Claire**:  [74:15] No, you've circled back.

**Stacey**:  [74:16] Oh, good.

**Claire**:  [74:19] She said teaching is hard.

**Stacey**:  [74:20] True.

**Claire**:  [74:21] I think we can all agree on that.

**Stacey**:  [74:24] I'm glad I could be helpful.

**Claire**:  [74:26] [laughs] It can be overwhelming to create lesson plans, to become familiar with the curriculum, and also the bureaucracy, not only in your school district, but also in your school. She says that many teachers struggle to move outside the Atlas model. I think...

**Stacey**:  [74:46] What's Atlas model? Oh, where you're carrying the whole thing on your shoulders?

**Claire**:  [74:49] That's right, and you are responsible for everything.

**Stacey**:  [74:52] Good turn of phrase there.

**Claire**:  [74:57] [laughs] As a new teacher, what small things would you suggest that you could incorporate ‑‑ non‑Atlas‑model techniques ‑‑ so you don't feel overwhelmed and feeling like you have to revamp everything, especially within the first months of being a new teacher?

[75:17] They're in this methods course, so lots of information's coming at them. Especially when they come out of systems where the only model they really know is how were taught, it's very easy that you carry that along.

[75:33] Coming with all this information, she's feeling overwhelmed. What small techniques would you suggest that she can do to help her move out of that?

**Stacey**:  [75:44] First of all, this is how I feel every time I go to a conference ‑‑ I want to do all 512 new things right away. The truth is I'm not going to implement anything I learned at ACTFL this semester. I am going to think about it, write it down, do a little bit of research, look up teacher blogs ‑‑ there's so many teacher blogs out there ‑‑ and, see if anyone's already done it and created a handout that they're freely sharing.

[76:11] Before I implement anything, I'm going to write down the things I liked and do a little bit more research to see, do I have to recreate the wheel or if someone already recreated it, I can just implement it.

[76:22] Next semester is when I'll start implementing things, once I have an idea of what's the low‑hanging fruit. There's a couple more episodes I want your Latin teacher to listen to. One is Episode 94, "Transitioning to Proficiency, Spoken Latin and Comprehensible Input Strategies with Stefanie Neal."

[76:40] One of our regular contributors interviewed Stefanie. It talked about why they moved from a grammar syllabus to a more proficiency‑oriented approach. She also has some specific comprehensible input strategies she uses in class. These are no‑prep strategies. That's a good episode.

[76:59] There is an episode that I recorded with a teacher whose blog I followed for years. His name is Lance Piantaggini. He goes by Magister P. He is a really cool guy. What I find remarkable about Lance is he only works at school. He has contracted hours on his teaching contract, which I think in his case is eight to three years, something like that.

[77:24] Those are the hours that he works. He doesn't take work home. He doesn't work on the weekends. He had a social media campaign called Teacher Sunday where he posted pictures of himself having martinis on patios on Sundays. He has hobbies. He has a side business. He travels a lot. He has fulfilling relationships. He works his contracted hours. He earns the money he's paid.

[77:47] His students learn a ton. He's really good at tracking and talking about what his students are learning and being able to show results of that learning.

[77:56] He does not teach in the same way I would. His strategies would not work for me, but I followed his blog for a long time because a lot of his strategies were great for me and are huge time savers.

[78:08] He is constantly challenging me to think about, is all this labor I'm putting into my class making it better? If all this labor isn't making my class better, then I better be doing it because I love it, I would rather be doing that than hanging out with my children, or engaging in my hobbies.

[78:26] If I'm doing it because I don't know how to do anything better, then that's terrible roller coaster. You got to get off of that ride.

[78:34] I would really encourage her to listen to those two episodes. Lance's episode is Episode 108. The other one is Episode 94. If you listen to those back to back, you'll get a really good sense of what's possible, not just in a Latin classroom. These happen to be Latin teachers, but in any classroom.

[78:50] I also have a blog post where I asked, from the "We Teach Languages" account, "What are some low and no prep strategies that you find highly effective in class?" I compiled the dozens and dozens of responses into one blog post. It's on my personal blog. I'll also put a link to that for your students.

[79:09] I'm going to tell one more story. None of these are concrete strategies. I'm giving you hope. Strategies are out there.

[79:21] This semester, I'm teaching a class that I haven't taught in a long time, with a book I've never taught with before, and I didn't want to do it the way the textbook was implying I should. I wanted it to be very communicative, very proficiency‑oriented.

[79:36] I've been putting 15 or 20 hours a week of work into teaching one section of one course that has 15 students in it that I will never teach again. This is "the" instance of the course. It's been a huge waste of time.

[79:53] My students' lives aren't better because I put in 15 to 20 hours a week on this course. They're definitely not learning more. I, 100 percent, did it for me so that I could say, "All of these things I'm learning how to do, all of these ways that my teaching has changed, all of these ideas I have for what might be great in the classroom, can I make them work in this really traditional model I'm teaching in right now? Can I blend them together?"

[80:21] It was a big experiment. I wanted to do it, and I have, 100 percent, taken ownership of that.

[80:27] However, if I were to approach this semester without that frame, just thinking about what's best for me and what's best for my students, and not this huge methodology experiment I've been engaging in, ideally, I would have some teaching routines.

[80:45] Like, every day, I get to class and I show an authentic image from the target culture and ask questions like, "What do you see? Who is that person? How do they feel? What's the weather like? What machines do you see?" Teach them to see and analyze pictures according to whatever the topic is that we're learning how to say.

[81:06] Then after we've done five, seven minutes on that routine, have another routine where I say, "OK, here is a couple of questions. I want you to think about what the answers to these questions might be. Then I want you to ask each other the questions. Then I'm going to ask you, 'What did he say?' Then I'm going to ask him, 'What did she say?'"

[81:24] Get students into routines that you can change the content every time, but the routine is the same so you don't have to worry about teaching the instructions or showing them how to do the game.

[81:35] Definitely have five or six games in your back pocket that, both give students a lot of input and generate interesting conversation, are fun.

[81:44] You don't have to teach how to do it every time, because you've got five or six games in your pocket. Every day, they come to class and we're doing new content and slightly different activities, but it's always activities they know.

[81:57] It's always routine so that when they come to class, they have that comfortable shoe feeling. Like, "Yes, I learn new things, but I learn it in the same way. I know how to behave. I know how to respond. There's no got you moments in class. My adrenaline doesn't have to ever go up. I can keep it in the comfort zone."

[82:14] I would also say that that playing is really important in a spoken language class, that allowing students. Even if you tell students activities are low stakes, they are conditioned over years of education to believe that everything is high stakes, and the compliance is always important, but games really disarms that.

[82:35] Engaging in fun activities, and games and art. Things that help to disarm those impulses to really get them in the language are important too, so that's my best advice.

**Claire**:  [82:46] This is a really interesting question. Because she doesn't speak the language that she teaches well because it's a lot [inaudible], but she does know the morphology, inflection, things like that. What can she do? What are some of the steps that she can do to increase her spoken fluency?

**Stacey**:  [83:07] Well, input. There's actually a spoken Latin podcast, "Follow Spoken Latin Teachers," because they often have Twitter chats in Latin, and talk to each other in Latin, read in Latin.

[83:20] There's like Harry Potter books have been translated to Latin. "Winnie the Pooh" books are in Latin.

[83:25] Magister P. who I mentioned a minute ago, Lance Piantaggini, he actually writes novellas in Latin, and sells them. You can buy them like on Amazon for seven bucks. They are for her students, but if she reads them also, her spoken Latin fluency will increase.

[83:44] I would say go onto YouTube immediately, Google Spoken Latin Teacher Podcast blog. Start listening to Latin. I don't know if there's a spoken Latin podcast she can get on her phone, but if there, spend an hour a day listening to it. You just got to get that language in your head.

[84:01] The good news is your students know way, way less spoken Latin than you do. If you only know a tiny bit of spoken Latin, which you've practiced ahead of time to make sure you're ready for class, good news, your students will learn that little bit that you know, and they will need to practice it every day for the rest of the semester, so you're still able to. You're still good.

[84:22] I also think that students when we say, "Research shows that this is good for you, it's good for your language acquisition. I wasn't taught to do it this way, but I'm figuring it out as we go. I'm committed to doing it the best I can because I know it's good for us as a class," I think students appreciate that.

[84:42] Knowing that my instruction is research based, and that I'm not always doing it perfectly, but I'm always working on it. It wouldn't hurt to tell students, "Hey, I'm not super comfortable with spoken Latin because I wasn't taught that way, but I want better for you than what I had."

**Claire**:  [84:55] Sure, and I think that translates in any language that just because we're the teacher, we don't know everything. We don't know all these different experiences.

[85:06] Also, we don't know all the vocabulary, and it's OK to say, "You know what, I don't know. Let's look that up," or, "Why don't you look that up?" or, "Let's explore it together."

**Stacey**:  [85:16] For a language that I have been speaking in my everyday life for years, and years, and years, so I can imagine the spoken Latin for the first time would be very daunting.

**Claire**:  [85:24] Sure thing. One last question from Gretchen. Now, her school uses block scheduling, and so she says it's almost like every day feels like a Monday.

**Stacey**:  [85:38] Yes, but you and I have both taught a lot of those three‑hour night classes, and I know that it's like a slog. You get there and you're like...After 30 minutes, your brain is going to be dead, and we're going to keep going for two and a half more hours. It's hard. [laughs]

**Claire**:  [85:59] She feels that students come in, and it's been so long since they last met that they've forgotten a lot of what they've been taught, what they've gone over. Do you have any suggestions for teaching on the block schedule both fulfilling the time in longer periods as well as activities, and resources for promoting practice, and memory?

[86:23] I think also there's that added complication about homework, and expectations of homework because I think that's another thing to consider for a lot of our students.

**Stacey**:  [86:37] Now, I actually do believe that retrieval practice can be really useful for language study. I think there are people who would disagree with me on this, but learning vocabulary is simply a matter of putting declarative word knowledge into long term storage, and making it procedural knowledge. It's readily accessible to you anytime you need that word.

[87:00] It requires a lot of repetition and new contexts, and a lot of practice retrieving that word from your brain at the point when you need it. I think that self quizzes where students can take the quiz as many times as it takes to get 100 is very useful as a homework assignment.

[87:21] Very low stakes where everyone is going to get a 100 on this homework assignment, but some people have to take it seven times, some people get it right the first time. For me, that's what I would like to do as a homework assignment.

[87:34] I've heard other teachers say that asking students to get input for homework is very useful. Like, "Watch this video. Read this paragraph." Input based assignments because those are not googleable, or Google translatable.

[87:50] Most other things I can imagine that people get for homework are pointless. Either students do them, but do them with so little attention, and care that they come to class having no idea what they did, or they don't do them at all, and then you have some people who are like, "Wait. What is this about? What is this verb?"

[88:08] Or they just cheat because they're more worried about getting to that finish lining, getting the points that you've promised them rather than engaging in the process. Once again, that goes back to terror.

[88:19] They're scared they're going to lose points which you mentioned in your presentation actually the other day on Google Translate. That one of the reasons students turn to it is because we've asked them to do things that are so terrifying they're like, "Well, I better Google it because I can't trust myself."

**Claire**:  [88:34] Absolutely.

**Stacey**:  [88:35] Anyway, all that to say a two‑hour block schedule, of course, every day feels like Monday. That's ridiculous. Can we get rid of the homework?

[88:46] Second, a two‑hour block is actually like not two hours' worth of instruction. It's actually like six 20‑minute classes, and those six 20‑minute classes have to be broken up with things that allow their brains to momentarily recharge.

[89:07] I really like mindfulness strategies in between. I think being in a language classroom is such an inherently extroverted activity that most of our students are going to need some quiet time.

[89:19] I like to say that you know there's three modes of communication ‑‑ interpretive, interpersonal, presentational. I like to say that the fourth mode of communication is reflection. Just you and your own brain thinking your own thoughts, and it's important to let students do that in the target language as well.

[89:36] I would say what's a 20‑minute lesson you can plan? A warm up, a media activity, and then a closing. Hopefully, the closing is something that allows them to be mindful, or to do some reflection, or just to have a couple of minutes of quiet stillness before they set back out for the new thing.

[89:56] I would also say that sometimes it's OK to do those more serious tech savvy activities that are a little bit more academic in nature, but if I have six 20‑minute blocks, I might plan alternating a more tech savvy academic activity in the first one, and then a playful engagement one in the second, and then break things up.

[90:17] I'm thinking of different categories of activities I would do, so yes, I'm imaging a visual map to help me make sure I don't accidentally spend the first hour pulling teeth to get the words out of them. Then all of a sudden, the whole hour has gone by, and they have done no learning, and they are exhausted, and frustrated.

[90:37] I'm frustrated because the class hasn't gone well which dooms the second half. Having like a schedule that keeps their actual limitations of their brains in mind seems like a good way to go.

**Claire**:  [90:51] The part about homework, I put that in.

**Stacey**:  [90:54] You put that in.

**Claire**:  [90:55] Because I think she wanted to be able to...It feels like a little bit like sort of rake where students lose so much. It's almost like you're starting from the beginning, but there is the complication. It's difficult to assign lots of homework in order to keep them caught up kind of thing.

[91:15] Is there some ideas that you might have of helping them transition back into the class, whether it would be bell work, or something they can do, or...?

**Stacey**:  [91:26] Well, input. I don't know what her class is like, but...

**Claire**:  [91:35] Very, very small.

**Stacey**:  [91:36] Most teachers I have observed don't give their students enough input. They don't give their students enough whole language to make sense of. They're like, "OK. We're going to answer these four questions," and students jump right into producing the language before they've really soaked a lot of it up.

[91:56] Yeah, we have to first take in a lot of language that we can completely understand, totally comprehensible language. Then we start to analyze and process that language, and we're making sense of it, but we're not producing original sentences.

[92:13] We're actually using the text as a basis for our discussion. Then after that, we can start doing some more scaffolded, or open ended production.

[92:24] Once again, people will disagree with me on everything I'm saying, but I feel pretty confident in my answers. The people would disagree. I can hear the voices of people who would disagree with me in my ear as I'm saying these things.

[92:36] I wonder if Gretchen is doing anything that's like free voluntary reading where you have a little classroom library, some pop culture magazine, some leveled readers that are incomprehensible language for novices.

[92:50] Just a variety of different things students can read, and the first 15 minutes of class is just students get a book, and sit down, and read for a while. Then put their book mark in when the timer goes off, and we start class by saying, "What did you read? What's the book? Who's the author? Who are characters in the part you read? What happened?"

[93:09] Then move to the next student just to get that input priming where we're getting started on the right foot. That might be effective.

[93:20] I don't use free voluntary reading in my own classes because I have 50 minutes a few times a week, and I'll complain to anyone in person who wants to know more about why this is a really tragic format.

[93:33] The research about why reading for pleasure is beneficial for language learning is overwhelming, and the teachers I know who do use it...

[93:47] In fact, let me recommend an episode. There are several episodes about voluntary reading in class, but one in 2019 that I think is really nice is Episode 97. It's called "Independence, Choice, Peace, and Montessori with Valerie Shull."

[94:07] She talked a little bit about the mechanics of how she incorporates free voluntary reading into her three‑time‑a‑week class. Why she gives up 30 minutes of her three hours a week just to free voluntary reading, and the incredible benefits that she's seen from it, so that might be a good resource.

**Claire**:  [94:24] Excellent. I just want to close because we've just come, or coming back from ACTFL. We had a really rich experience. We got to talk to other language instructors. We got to learn new things at presentations, and workshops, and opening sessions, and get really excited and lots of ideas.

[94:50] For a lot of teachers, ACTFL can be inaccessible. It's time. It's money and not everybody can have that opportunity. What is the next best thing for teachers who want to connect with others, they want to get excited, they want to learn new ideas, they want to see what other people are doing?

**Stacey**:  [95:16] That's a great question. I think any teacher who's not already doing that is missing out on one of the best parts of their profession. Doing this work alone just sounds awful.

[95:27] Two things. One is you have a state level conference, or a regional conference. I'm actually going to pull up an episode about that.

[95:36] Episode 95 is about local professional organizations. Like the TFLTA conference is in Franklin, Tennessee which is like in the midpoint at the state.

[95:45] There's only one overnight, so if you're coming even from three hours away, and you need to spend the night, you can keep it to a reasonable amount of money. You can bring your family. You can have a nice weekend out of Nashville.

[95:57] For those of us who are in Middle Tennessee, we can just wake up a little early, and drive in that day, and it is really wonderful. It's small. It's intimate.

[96:08] You actually get to know the names of the people who are in the sessions with you. You get to hear what teachers all over the state are doing.

[96:15] We have a lot of the same challenges. We're dealing with the same policy issues. We have the same funding issues, and so it really creates a wonderful sense of solidarity to be part of a state level organization.

[96:28] Also the state level organization, in addition to their annual conference, they have smaller workshops around the state. If you're already plugged in, say you live in Memphis which I know your students probably do, there is a West Tennessee workshop in the spring.

[96:43] If you're plugged in to the organization, you can go to that. It's in your neighborhood. It's for you.

[96:49] Also some of the districts in the state of Tennessee are actually making all of their resources freely available. If you go to these conferences, you get to know those districts' supervisors, and you get access to that free stuff.

[97:01] That's one. Whatever your local professional organization is, whether it really is local like this one for the greater Washington area here in DC, there's one at every state level.

[97:14] If that's not possible for whatever reason, find your team on social media.

[97:21] I joined Twitter in 2009, and I think I only discovered the thriving language teacher community there maybe five years ago. Something like that.

[97:35] I was on Twitter for years. I never met another teacher. I had no idea that's what people were doing there, but a few years ago, probably not even five. Probably less than that.

[97:45] It's hard to remember time because then I'm like, "Oh, well, I've had the podcast for three years," and I definitely knew about langchat before the podcast, but it's all melting together.

[98:06] There's a hashtag #langchat, and there's hashtags like #ellchat, and I think maybe [foreign language] or something like that.

[98:12] There's all these different hashtags that teachers use to find each other, and have conversations that build over time. There's also like synchronous chats you can be a part of, but generally, those people are amazing.

[98:22] They have blogs, and they freely post all of their ideas, and we hush out really controversial issues. We reconcile differences, and we constantly learn from each other.

[98:34] I know Twitter is one, but I know there's a lot of language teachers on Instagram as well. Facebook groups, you couldn't even join all the Facebook groups for teachers. There's so many.

[98:44] Whatever social media you're already on, try and figure out where the language teachers are, and intentionally say, "Hi. I'm new. I want to be part of this club," and I promise you, they will welcome you in. Language teachers are good eggs.

**Claire**:  [99:00] It's really wonderful. Especially I know lots of language teachers may be the only language teacher in their school. That can feel isolating when you're not passing colleagues, and saying, "Hey, what do you think about this?"

[99:14] Having a resource that is actually in their own classroom via the Internet I think is wonderful.

**Stacey**:  [99:21] I think that's the benefit of a state level organization too, because if you live in a small rural town, and a person in the next county over is also the only language teacher in their small rural town, you're going to have a lot more in common, and a lot more ability to share the load.

[99:37] You might even be able to plan a curriculum together, and plan instruction together because even though you're in separate counties, you're both in Tennessee. You're both in rural areas. You're both having the same policy and economic issues in your classrooms. Join forces. Avengers unite.

**Claire**:  [99:56] Well, thanks Stacey for sharing your experiences, and your advice, and also sharing more resources.

**Stacey**:  [100:05] Right. I have been talking for two hours. Seriously, I'm told it has been two hours of interview, and I can't imagine any human would voluntarily listen to all of this.

[100:17] Claire, please, do not force your methods to students to listen to two hours of me talking.

[100:21] [laughter]

**Claire**:  [100:21] I won't. It'll be good. I mean, they can press forward [inaudible 1].

[100:24] [background music]

**Stacey**:  [100:24] Thanks for asking. It's fun to be the interviewee.

**Announcer**:  [100:28] If you have questions or comments related to today's episode, we would love to hear from you. You can reach out to us multiple ways. All of them are available at our website, weteachlang.com/contact.

[100:44] You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter at weteachlang. We would like to say a very special thank you to the Pearll Foreign Language Resource Center for partnering with us to provide transcripts, and other professional development resources related to the episodes.

[101:05] You can learn more about Pearll by going to pearll.nflc.umd.edu. Thanks so much for listening. Bye‑bye.

|  |
| --- |
| Podcast transcripts are provided through a partnership with **PEARLL** (Professionals in Education Advancing Research and Language Learning), a Title VI Language Resource Center at the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland. Find additional transcripts: **www.pearll.nflc.umd.edu/podcast** |

Transcription by CastingWords