

DAN MANOLESCU

**MEMORY AND IMAGINATION
OR FROM REMEMBER TO CREATE**

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Living in a world which, more than ever before, is faced with constantly changing tendencies and events, people must use various strategies in order to adapt to an array of new and challenging situations in both their professional and personal lives. Even if these strategies are generally developed in a “learn-as-you-go” manner, numerous representatives of the educational theory formulated during the past few decades (e.g., Cannatella 2004, Richards 2013, Jones 2020) have suggested that teachers themselves can play an essential role in helping their students acquire adaptability skills as long as they make creativity an integral part of the teaching and learning experience. This happens because, as Maley (2015: 9) explains, “creativity helps us to deal with change, and as the world changes ceaselessly, so will more creative solutions be needed.”

This conviction that the teaching - learning process is an act that should go beyond the transfer of static knowledge and should involve the extraordinary power of curiosity and creativity lies at the very heart of Dan Manolescu’s book, *Memory and Imagination Or From Remember to Create*. Being meant as a handbook for teachers of English as a secondary/ foreign language, *Memory and Imagination* definitely represents more than a collection of principles, methods and activities that teachers can use with a view to enabling student learning. It rather is “a pleasant reading of discovery” (p. 8), as the author himself states in the section of Acknowledgements, an invitation for the teachers to reflect on the principles that facilitate student-centered learning and to realize that the success of an ESL class depends on “the knowledge and the preparation of every detail” (p. 10).

A brief look at the Table of contents reveals that the book consists of six main sections whose titles are straightforward and meaningful at the same time: *Curiosity and Creativity*, *Memory and Imagination*, *Lessons in Practical Knowledge*, *Stories, Retell/rewrite and Miscellaneous*. These sections are preceded by *Acknowledgements*, *Foreword* and *Rationale*, and are followed by two Appendices (*Collocations and Idioms Worksheets* and *The Irregular Verb Chart*), and by *Final Thoughts*. A valuable index is also provided in order to facilitate access to the abundant information offered by this book.

Starting from the reality that language is a means of communication among people, Manolescu embraces Dor's (2015) view that the language we use not only shares a certain experience, but also instructs our interlocutors in the process of imagining that experience. In the classroom, the teachers' communication with their students should be a process of discovery, in which, with the help of curiosity and creativity, students are guided to find answers to various challenging questions. Curiosity and creativity represent the focus of the first section in this book, in which the author argues that the potential of these factors to produce thousands of inventions and discoveries should be exploited in the classroom, where students and teachers have the ability to create "especially when their curiosity is aroused and stimulated by new knowledge" (p. 14). More specifically, the previous cognitive experience that teachers and students bring to the classroom will gradually turn into "the building blocks" that create new knowledge with the help of the communicative competence. Manolescu points out that, in this process of conveying new knowledge, teachers must always use examples, because abstractions cannot be properly understood otherwise. The section also includes an extensive collection of creativity worksheets and lesson plans that are organized according to the students' proficiency level (Beginning, High Beginning, Low Intermediate, Intermediate, High Intermediate, Low Advanced, Advanced, High Advanced) and to the levels of learning in Bloom's Taxonomy (Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating).

The transition to the following section is achieved by means of the notion of "creative learning", which is defined as a fusion of two concepts: memory and imagination. Imagination is very much dependent on memory, because people cannot imagine things with which they have had absolutely no experience before. Therefore, as Manolescu explains, "from curiosity and creativity to memory and imagination, students will discover new information that will satisfy their thirst for knowledge, practical hints will stimulate their curiosity, and in time new skills will make them better thinkers, better speakers, and better writers" (p. 102). After synthesizing theoretical insights from philosophy, psychology and applied linguistics towards a thorough understanding of the dynamics of memory and imagination, the author offers another set of practical ideas that will help educators prepare motivating classes and, consequently, get their students to be creative and to use their imagination. Just like in the previous section, the activities proposed here are organized according to the students' level of proficiency and to Bloom's Taxonomy of six levels of learning, and cover everything from vocabulary and grammar to language skills and language functions.

The other four main sections enjoy a more special status, as here the author provides fewer conceptual explanations and clarifications, focusing more on the presentation of further ways in which teachers can empower their students to go from remember to create, and to use imagination in order to awaken the knowledge that is latent in them. Dan Manolescu offers practical examples of how the expression of virtually any kind of human experience, from literary pieces and stories from various sources, to proverbs and philosophical studies, can be exploited by those educators who want to engage their students in a complex learning experience, one in which, in addition to understanding the subtleties of the English language, they are also taught "lessons in practical knowledge" (p. 183), moral values, cultural issues and, maybe most important of all, "self-mastery, which, if appropriately dealt with, can self-produce excellence and simultaneously self-command of the highest order." (p. 242). I consider that the five pieces of

advice that teachers should keep in mind when devising lesson plans are relevant for the educational philosophy advocated by Dan Manolescu's book: (1) Inspire your students to learn from their own life experiences and, at the same time, set an example and inspire others; (2) Empower the students to emulate their own role models and, if possible, even exceed their own expectations; (3) Create an emotional attachment to goodness; (4) Motivate students to discover new things and use their power of imagination; (5) Cultivate the students' desire to learn what is right and useful in life (p. 185).

Based on the knowledge and the experience gained by the author over decades of teaching English as a secondary language, and benefitting from useful insights from other fellow educators, as pointed out in the section of Acknowledgements, *Memory and Imagination* represents an extremely useful resource for teachers of various backgrounds and levels. Anyone involved or interested in the field of English language teaching will certainly benefit from the wide range of worksheets and lesson plans on various language items, skills and functions, will find inspiration in the lists of questions to be asked in the course of lesson preparation, and will reflect on how to find ways to knowledge through the medium of recollection, discovery, and invention. What is the rationale behind such a book? The answer is offered by the author himself, when he paraphrases what Toni Morrison said about writing: "if you can't find the book you want to read, you will have to write it yourself" (p. 11).

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