

For motivating speech pathology students to become exemplary person-centred, interprofessional practitioners by building mutually beneficial links between innovative teaching, clinical expertise, and high-impact research

Overview

My teaching in speech pathology (SP) creatively uses the teaching-clinical-research nexus to enhance student learning. I help students understand the lived experience of their patients and clients, and work effectively with other professionals in teams that achieve an evidence-based, person-centred service. Building on 12 years of clinical experience in the UK and Australia, and 20 years of nationally and internationally recognised scholarly research, my approach to teaching and curriculum design promotes active student engagement in learning in order to benefit SP clients. My research explores therapeutic relationships, responsive practice and valuing the voices of patients. My publications include papers and book chapters, which address how to teach students to work in this way, and how to conduct this kind of research.

After completing my PhD (1999-2002) at Flinders University, I held postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Queensland and Flinders, and I was acknowledged by my profession as a Fellow of Speech Pathology Australia in 2003. I joined Edith Cowan University (ECU) in 2010. I coordinate and teach two second-year units, two third-year units, and the Honours program. This year, I am also Course Coordinator for the undergraduate SP Bachelor degree at ECU. I teach into practicum units and supervise Masters and PhD students. There are 25-35 students in each undergraduate unit. Our students are mostly women from diverse backgrounds, including school-leavers, mature-aged, first-in-family and rural students. Students enter my units with varying levels of experience and confidence in understanding the issues facing clients who have communication and swallowing disorders and require SP. My classes are safe spaces to explore new ideas, notions of disability, and challenge stereotypes and negative attitudes. I am passionate about enabling deep learning and encourage students to reflect, discuss, read, and develop their appreciation of the complexities and diversity of the people for whom and with whom they will work.

My interest in teaching prompted me to gain a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (high distinction) in 2013 and an ECU Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning in 2015. I receive exceptionally high scores on ECU's *Unit and Teaching Evaluation Instrument* (UTEI), consistently well above the School and ECU means. In these formal evaluations, on a scale of -100 (strongly disagree) to +100 (strongly agree), my mean overall satisfaction (OS) for all units is +84 with 96% level of agreement. This compares to the School and ECU mean OS of +61 with 84% agreement. Last semester, I reached +100. Even with family responsibilities (four children) and a fractional position (0.6-0.8FTE), I have 85 refereed journal articles and book chapters with 65 published over 2010-19. I have over 1100 citations and an H-Index of 18. I have been a chief investigator on grants: three NHMRC, one Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and one UK Stroke Association, together worth over \$3m.

Category 1: Approaches to teaching and/or the support of learning that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn:

The integration of my teaching, research, and clinical experience supports student learning through innovative approaches to effective authentic, immersive and case-based learning. I encourage students to: become person-centred professionals with positive attitudes to difference and disability; be excellent interprofessional communicators; demonstrate self-reflection and empathy; and develop the ability to empower clients. My innovation, leadership and scholarship are demonstrated through conducting and publishing leading research in the teaching of SP and providing innovative learning and teaching for different contexts.

Conducting and publishing leading research used in SP teaching

My disciplinary research and research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) are highly cited in student textbooks and articles, and are on university recommended reading lists in Australia, United States, Canada, UK, South Africa and NZ. The focus of my research and publication includes: working with people with communication disability (such as *aphasia*, a language disorder acquired after brain damage); setting rehabilitation goals; working in groups; therapeutic relationships; clinical ethics; discharge of patients from therapy; and the experiences of Aboriginal Australians after stroke and brain injury. I published the first paper that recognised the need to teach students explicitly about clinical and ethical considerations when discharging patients with aphasia from therapy.¹ An example of the broad influence of this paper is contained

in an email from Prof. Travis Threats, Chair in Communication Sciences and Disorders, St Louis University, USA in 2012: *I use your articles in my adult neurogenetics communication disorder courses... Of particular importance to me and my teaching was your article entitled 'Beginning to teach the end...' As Department Chair, I have shared this article with my Director of Clinical Education to work this into the framework of the clinical education of our students.*

For five years, my framework for collaborative goal setting² has been in the top four most highly read articles in the principal journal in the field (*Aphasiology*) (7667 reads by 21/7/19), and is a key paper used across SP courses internationally: *Within both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, SMARTER is the paper used to introduce the concept of goal setting with people with aphasia, and encourages students to consider this in a holistic person centred way. The framework also provides a tangible practical resource for them in their learning and in practice* (Dr Julie Morris, Head of Speech and Language Sciences, Newcastle University, UK, 2019). My papers, including how to make aphasia assessments more person-centred, are cited in textbooks and used internationally: *We have been very impressed with the work you have done involving goal setting, assessment, and aphasia in the acute setting. I particularly appreciate the 'Assess for Success' chapter³* (Dr Ellen Bernstein-Ellis, Director, Aphasia Treatment Program, Communication Sciences and Disorders, California State University, 2018). *We devote time to considering the impact of cognition on all aspects of intervention. I find your work really useful here in helping students fully consider all aspects of intervention in a holistic way, including building up a relationship, using informal assessment, and goal setting.* (Dr Lucy Dipper, City, University of London, 2018).

The *Australian Aphasia Rehabilitation Pathway Best Practice Statements* (www.aphasiapathway.com.au) are used to guide national clinical practice, including for students on placement, and include my goal-setting, assessment and discharge research. My work on professional-client relationships has impacted other areas of teaching: *...Your published papers influenced my teaching in the post-graduate entry Masters... Issues in relation to challenges faced by both patients and clinicians around professional boundaries, leaving therapy, notions of weaning, and the therapeutic relationship, being central to all of these processes, were integrated most successfully into my voice lectures - and also into those lectures on Counselling for Speech Pathology across different communication disorder areas.* (Adjunct Assoc Prof Janet Baker, Flinders University, 2018).

I have presented keynotes to students and clinicians, including: NZ Speech-Language Therapists' Association National Conference, 2012; City, University of London, 2014; American Speech and Hearing Association Convention, 2018; and will present to the British Aphasiology Society Conference, 2020. My [podcasts](#) (SLP-Minded and Aphasia Access) are available to students, and for ongoing professional development. I have also published on qualitative research methodologies⁴⁻⁶ and am invited to present this to students nationally and internationally (for example, at the International Symposium on Health Sciences in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2019). I am known for my application of grounded theory to SP⁴ and will be teaching qualitative methodologies to the SP Honours students from 2020.

Providing innovative learning and teaching for different contexts

Narrative-based learning and person-centred practice I teach an inclusive model of health and wellbeing that incorporates respect for clients' individuality, autonomy, and expertise. I use the World Health Organisation *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (WHO-ICF) framework to look holistically at the needs of people with communication or swallowing disorders and how these impact on quality of life. I embed *narrative-based learning*, using stories as a vehicle to meaningfully engage and inspire. People with communication disorders are often dismissed, disempowered and spoken over, so it is crucial students realise the power of stories and listen *for* them as well as *to* them.⁷

My passion for sharing narratives grew with my advocacy work, founding the first Australian community-based support charity for people with aphasia, the *Talkback Association for Aphasia Inc.* in 1999 and later, through the development of the Australian Aphasia Association in 2002. These organisations help people with aphasia re-establish social connections, practice conversational skills and share experiences. Second-year students have the opportunity to hear, collect, reflect on and re-tell these stories. I invite guest speakers who have had a stroke, have cerebral palsy (CP), or live with a stutter or dystonia. A parent of a child with Down Syndrome and a young deaf-signing woman who explains Deaf culture using AUSLAN are included. These opportunities provide *insider perspectives* on disability and allow students space to ask questions and talk informally with guest speakers. *I learn a lot more from hearing someone's story than from just hearing...*

what CP is and how it theoretically impacts the person. A focus of the unit is to see the individual, not just the disability, and the guest speakers help us to do that (UTEI 2014).

I use a series of innovative approaches to students' learning experiences and assessment. Using an existing [virtual reality setting](#), students interview Jim, an avatar who has dementia. Students receive feedback on their ability to talk to Jim in this safe, simulated environment. In class, we explore cross-cultural contexts including the experiences of Aboriginal people,⁸ and those with English as an additional language. I use constructivist ideas moving students from surface to deep approaches to learning, providing authentic learning opportunities, and constructively aligning my unit objectives, teaching activities and assessments. For example, in one unit, students conduct primary qualitative interviews in authentic community contexts. One interview is at a local stroke support group with a person with a communication disorder and another is with a parent of a child with a severe physical disability, arranged with a local specialist school. As a qualitative researcher, I am experienced in interviewing people with communication disorders. *I learnt a lot from being able to see how Deb interacted with the guest speakers even when asking difficult and emotive questions. She is a great example of how we should conduct ourselves as therapists... (UTEI 2019).*

I teach students to run semi-structured in-depth interviews, and adapt this for people with aphasia by including multimodality supports and special strategies.⁶ Students work in pairs and one of their de-identified interviews is written up individually as a report while the other is presented verbally to the class. These presentations are shared at a *mini-conference*, which prompts discussion, builds confidence, oral communication and presentation skills. Sharing presentations makes meaningful the theoretical material on disability, the WHO-ICF, quality of life, narrative-based practice, interviewing skills, report-writing, and person-centred care. *I went to the [Stroke] group feeling nervous about saying something wrong, about coming across as insensitive or nosy. I found it to be an amazing experience... the information I took away from this session I could never have gotten from a text book or journal article. The lady we interviewed was such an inspiration... she said 'listen, just listen, everyone's story is different'. That has shown me there is dignity in being given the opportunity to tell your story and to be heard (email, second year student 2015).*

Authentic learning and assessment Students learn about shared decision making, collaborative goal setting, and providing accessible information, all key to my clinical and research work. This involves case-based discussions and self-reflection by students of their experiences of encounters in the health system. *Deb is always informative and interesting. She always gets the class talking and debating and this makes the lecture interesting. She also has so much knowledge and she knows how to put it across in a fun and interactive way (UTEI 2013).* I draw links between theoretical models/evidence-based guidelines and practice, for example by exploring cognitive models of language production, or neuroplasticity, and how these underpin the *nuts and bolts* of therapy. I teach in a simulated ward where the students role-play being the patient, a family member or therapist. In this environment, they translate theoretical, lecture-based material into practice, from the basics of washing hands or positioning oneself at the bedside for someone after stroke, to running a language or motor speech examination. I invite experts from the Communication & Assistive Technology Service Rehabilitation Technology Unit at Fiona Stanley Hospital to provide information and hands-on experience with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. *The assignments were well aligned to the content of the unit which helped me get my head around the content. I absolutely loved the AAC at the end. Wonderful end to an extremely interesting and enjoyable unit! (UTEI 2018).*

I continually draw on my clinical experiences demonstrating assessment techniques or talking about appropriate management, working with families or as part of a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary team. We use case-based materials, videos illustrating symptom profiles, and group discussion. *The lecturer was great. Very knowledgeable and really keen to get the students involved and sharing their ideas and/or experiences (UTEI 2017).* I direct students to the published evidence base for best practice with these disorders but at the same time, keep clinical and practical application firmly in the centre so the material is engaging. *Very approachable, has so much experience and just has a really good way with the students. She is highly respected by everyone. Really like the way she is so thorough with all of her references on the slides etc and gives you good direction in terms of what to do for extra learning, knowledge, resources. Knowing what tests are used in the 'real world' is really beneficial, invaluable to students (UTEI 2017).*

Interprofessional experiences I have led innovative approaches to providing students with interprofessional experiences. SP students are encouraged to see themselves as part of professional teams with the clients at the centre.⁹ Since 2012, I have collaborated with colleagues in Education and Occupational

Therapy to bring our students together to work through cases and explore how to support children with disability in mainstream schools. Students develop an inclusive lesson plan based on universal design. The evaluation has been presented at the annual ECU education forum, and published.¹⁰ *Deborah's capacity to use both her critical understanding of the role of speech pathologists in a variety of settings, plus her enthusiasm and motivation around professional interactions has resulted in a deeper understanding of the role of SPs and an enhanced awareness of the opportunities that exist in professional collaborations. (Dr John O'Rourke, School of Education, ECU, 2019).*

In 2018, I gained an ECU teaching and learning grant for *Seeing Voices*, an innovative approach to teaching voice, vocal anatomy and vocal health to an audience of 180 SP and performing arts students at the WA Academy of Performing Arts. I led an interprofessional team of SP, voice coaches, and an Ear, Nose and Throat consultant from Royal Perth Hospital for a live, recorded seminar showing students' laryngeal function under different vocal conditions. This work has been reported on [ABC television news](#) and will result in an online voice teaching resource. My interprofessional teaching also includes case-based sessions on the role of the SP within a palliative care team and end of life situations. I introduce students to the challenging reality of degenerative or terminal disease using cases from the specialist Palliative Care [online materials](#), readings, YouTube clips and web links. These learning experiences challenge and sometimes confront students but also stimulate their curiosity. *Interactive learning is definitely the way to go and Deb did a great job. I had lots of questions and she was always happy to answer them with her extensive knowledge (UTEI 2016).* I supervise cross-disciplinary Honours projects, including SP with foster carers in child protection, poetry in MS, and choral singing in Parkinson's Disease.

Translational teaching to build research capacity My SP Honours students undertake and publish research with clinical and practical value. I build students' qualitative research skills,⁴⁻⁶ and co-supervise Honours and PhD students beyond ECU because of this expertise. I encourage co-design in projects to promote research partnerships with participants with communication disorders.⁵ Since 2012, I have organised an annual Research Showcase, enabling Honours and postgraduate students and staff to present their work to SPs from across Perth. This is an authentic and energising way for students to communicate beyond the university and sets them up for national and international conference presentations and publications. Students also present their findings back to research participants and other stakeholders. This inclusive approach completes the circle of the teaching-practice-research nexus by transforming the ideas around narrative, person-centredness, and interprofessional teamwork in my teaching into respectful and ethical research practice by my students.

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