

“To put it simply” – Teaching through and about Simplicity

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ABSTRACT

I will present the outline of an ESP course for students of Information Design drawing upon John Maeda's book "The Laws of Simplicity", illustrating how a text can be used in a threefold manner, as a source for information and ideas, as an example of language usage, and as the basis for developing and/or selecting teaching materials. The combination seems particularly attractive to future information designers, judging from the anonymous evaluations by students, who described the course as the best and most practically applicable English course they had taken so far.

The "Laws of Simplicity" suggests itself for an English course in Information Design as its author, a graphic designer and computer scientist, proposes ten laws for simplifying complex systems in business, life and product design. Not only is the subject matter of interest to students, it is also the unique correspondence of content and style of presentation that is appealing and also invites further investigation.

My students were required to read the book and during lessons we discussed the content and the language used. The exercises methodologically varied between different teaching and learning styles. The variability in this creative approach is supposed to contrast with the overall topic of the course.

The use of creative tuition methods fosters learner autonomy and motivation through interactivity. Using subject-specific authentic texts clearly raised the learners' motivation which was further increased through fun in the activities, curiosity as the subject matter was of interest to the design students, multimedial learning material and social interaction.

Keywords: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), Design English; ELT, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Language Teaching Methodology