

# **Language Teaching and Learning: 10 Axioms and their Corollaries**

Dr. Ray Clifford

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Language is the most complex of all human behaviors, yet we often take it for granted. For instance, some people assume that native speakers are always the best teachers. However assuming that anyone who speaks a language is qualified to teach it – is like assuming that anyone with teeth is qualified to be a dentist.

Language teaching is a professional discipline that is acquired through formal study and practice. Just as the discipline of geometry has axioms such as “The sum the interior angles of a triangle is always 180 degrees”, there are also axioms that apply to language teaching and learning. Ten of those axioms are listed below. To see the implications of those axioms for language teaching and learning, please see the full PowerPoint presentation.

## **My top 10 Axioms of Language Teaching and Learning**

**Axiom 10:**

**There is no single right way to teach someone another language – but there are innumerable wrong ways to teach languages.**

**Axiom 9:**

**Learner aptitude and learner motivation are both related to the “time on task” required to learn a language.**

**Axiom 8:**

**Learners’ proficiency in their first language may limit their progress in a second language.**

**Axiom 7:**

**There are different kinds of “learning”, and each kind requires different ways of thinking.**

**Axiom 6:**

**Speaking ability and listening comprehension are mutually supporting.**

**Axiom 5:**

**For students, it is the tests – not the curriculum – that defines what they are supposed be learning.**

Axiom 4:

**The STANAG 6001 proficiency levels are always mastered sequentially.**

Axiom 3:

**Unlike STANAG 6001 base levels, the plus levels are not criterion-referenced performance standards.**

Axiom 2:

**Teachers are essential for advanced language learning.**

Axiom 1:

**The more content there is to learn, the longer it will take to learn it.**

As mentioned above, the accompanying PowerPoint slides explain those associated principles. The last axiom listed above, Axiom number 1, is so fundamental and universally applicable, that I usually refer to it as my '1<sup>st</sup> Law of Learning'.