

Hello, and welcome to the Musicuentos Black Box Podcast.

My name is Sara-Elizabeth Cottrell and I'm the blogger behind Musicuentos.com. The Musicuentos Black Box Podcast is a podcast designed to help you put second language acquisition research to work in the world language classroom.

This is a special episode of the podcast in that the topic is not an article, it's a book. The topic of this episode is the first part of a book called *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth about Moving Others*. It was written by Daniel Pink and published by Riverhead Books in 2012.

I wanted to read this book because of how much I enjoyed one of Pink's previous works, titled *Drive*, a book about research on motivation. In *Drive*, Pink totally changed how I look at the concept of motivating students. This new book, *To Sell is Human*, is also, in a way, about motivating people, or more specifically, how to move people, how to influence them to do something. Pink's direct target is salespeople, and that may make you say, well, what does that have to do with teachers? But that's part of Pink's very first point in the book. Even the impression that the traditional sales position is on its way out is erroneous - it turns out that one in nine workers in the U.S. is still in sales. But according to Pink, the rest of us are too. We spend our time trying to move someone to do something. As teachers, we're trying to get students to part with time and effort. We're trying to get them to give us their attention when a hundred other voices are doing the same thing. So what Pink has to say is applicable as we try to improve how well we're moving our students.

Pink starts by giving three reasons we're all in sales now. The first is the significant rise of entrepreneurship. On a micro level I've seen this play out in my own life. I would have always said I was terrible at sales. And I do not like new, uncertain experiences - frankly, they terrify me. So I never saw myself as an entrepreneur. But one day my husband said "You should start a blog" and now, more than six years later, here I am reading Daniel Pink's book and saying, wow, I really am working in sales. Sometimes people part with their money and sometimes they part with their time but regardless they're parting with something that's valuable to them in exchange for something I have, an ebook, or a blog post, or a podcast. I even have a gmail folder called marketing. Whoa. Somewhere along the way I turned into a salesperson.

Another reason Pink claims we're all in sales is something he calls elasticity, nice because it starts with the E he was going for but he's basically talking about how we wear a lot of hats. When you were training to be a teacher you probably didn't know how many hats you were going to wear. Think - what variety of skills are you using as an

educator? Putting aside the hats I wear to serve my family, community, and church, and just focusing on what talents I've had to acquire and put to use since I started teaching, I'm a researcher, copy writer, copy editor, technology troubleshooter and lately even an ebook designer, and graphic designer - okay I really stink at graphic design. Almost everything you see from me related to graphic design, I paid someone else to do. But the point is that as the person dedicated solely to sales really has started to be phased out of many companies and especially with the increase in entrepreneurial micro-companies, workers are developing a variety of skills to accomplish what they want or need.

Ed-Med

Pink's 3rd evidence that more people are in sales is data from sectors of kinds of work. Specifically he says that the sector that's growing the fastest is what he calls "Ed-Med." I don't know if he couldn't get the data to say it was growing fast without the medical section, but he talks about medicine and education as if they were naturally in the same sector and honestly, I still don't understand how. But he quotes people from both professional areas who say that education and medicine both are essentially about moving people. In education, indeed, every day we're trying to move our students to buy in to what we're selling, that the lesson I'm teaching is worth their time, attention, and effort and the payout is big. In language teaching, we're trying to move our students to put in the enormous amount of time and effort it will take to develop communicative proficiency in a language, telling them that the benefits in their personal life, their employment, their life experiences, and even their brain power will be more than worth it. It's a sales job every single day. He quotes a language teacher I interact with on Twitter sometimes, Larry Ferlazzo, who hits the key: For the long term, we have to create the conditions where they can move themselves." Motivation is the key.

After convincing us that we're all in sales, Pink closes out the first part of the book by talking about how we've moved from a world of *buyer* beware, to a world of *seller* beware. I have to say that sometimes Pink can be overly dramatic to make a point, such as saying that most Americans only know two words in Latin, caveat emptor-- really, I couldn't have come up with that phrase and can think of a lot more common Latin phrases like "et cetera" but anyway, it means buyer beware, and the concept at least is well understood. When people think of sales, Pink's surveys show that they conjure up an old view of a sleazy guy in a suit, a car salesman out to get them to buy something flawed for too much money. This old view is based on what a classic economics paper called "asymmetry of information" - the salesman has more information than you, which makes you mistrust him. But now, information is so widely available through the internet, social media, consumer magazines and so on, that there's more equity in the information that's available. You might have more up-to-date information about your

product than the salesman does. You can also offer feedback -or create a marketing disaster- through your social media comments and so Pink says it's become a world of caveat venditor - *seller* beware. Be aware that your market knows at least as much as you do. Be aware that they can make you pay dearly if you do them wrong. In this modern market, honesty, fairness, transparency are often the only viable path. For us, it's *teacher* beware. Be aware that many of our students have a world of information and misinformation in their pockets. It's no longer a disparity of here's all the great stuff I know and it's my job to pour it into your brain. What I need to "sell" to my students is not so much the information, it's how to find it themselves, how to use it, and more importantly, why they should love finding it. It's time to stop focusing on what the bell ringers and quiz scores and exit tickets mean -which is really, not a whole lot- and, as Pink says about ourselves as salespeople, *care* about the students. Not care so that they'll learn, but care because we actually do care. When students see that we care about who they are AND who they're becoming, we'll be more effective about moving them to succeed where it really matters: in learning how to learn, in learning how to evaluate information, and in learning how to use information to accomplish their passions - because those skills will help throughout their lifetime, not just in this class period.

In part 2 of the book, Pink wants us to know how the ABCs of sales have changed. ABC in relation to sales used to mean Always Be Closing, but that's about the sleazy salesman who knows more than you do and knows you have limited choices. Now, as we said, consumers have tons of choices and more information so the new ABC is Attunement, Buoyancy, and Clarity.

Pink defines the A, Attunement as "the ability to bring one's actions and outlook into harmony with other people and with the context you're in." It's also called perspective-taking, and it hinges on three principles.

First, increase your power by reducing it. Traditional education has been centered on a powerful teacher with all the knowledge imparting it to the powerless students. But students are the ones who need to own the learning or we're wasting our time. This doesn't mean should I be a pushover. Teachers are a different case here than a traditional sales position because you actually do have responsibilities like managing student behavior and creating a safe learning environment, but talking about the learning itself and less about the environment, more effectively moving students starts with assuming you aren't the one with the power.

Second, use your head as much as your heart: if you read research on parenting you know that developing a child's empathy is very important for their future success, but as it turns out, when it comes to moving students, even more effective than attuning

yourself to what people are feeling is attuning yourself to what they're thinking. Try this tomorrow as you try to move your students to accomplish a learning objective: ask yourself, okay, what are they thinking as they face this?

Third, Pink says to mimic strategically. I suppose mimicry is interesting but I don't see a lot of application for education. Basically, people are better at moving others when they actually mimic physically what they're doing, like facial expressions, leaning forward and gesturing, and when they touch the person. But here's one tip of mimicking that might be good for teachers – try repeating some of the important things students say, word for word. Not so much it's noticeable, but perhaps once a class period or once every other class period. Repeat a very good question or an impressively correct response, word for word, before you address a response.

In the question of who's good at attunement, it turns out that the best attuners are those Pink calls ambiverts. You'd normally think that extroverts are the best salespeople while introverts are the worst. The research doesn't bear this out. Actually, extroverts are only slightly better at moving others than introverts. Really, the people who are best at moving others because they're more attuned to them are exactly in between: ambiverts, who have both extrovert qualities and introvert qualities. Extraverts can talk too much and listen too little. They're too assertive and it puts people off. Some teachers think they'd be more effective in the classroom, especially with high schoolers, if they were more extroverted, but here's some hope for you: you don't have to be extroverted to be an effective teacher. In fact, to effectively move students, we should strive to be somewhere right in between an introvert and an extrovert.

In this section, Pink starts adding a part after each chapter that he calls a "sample case," like the sample case salespeople carry around to show you their wares. For Attunement, Pink suggests you re-evaluate how you start a conversation. He himself is trying to move from starting conversations with "What do you do?" to "Where are you from?" For teachers, how about trying, "What do you want to be?" or a related question that gets you and students thinking about their goals for the future, a very important topic throughout their education. The information in the answer will help you tailor your curriculum to a student's intrinsic motivation, which is their most powerful tool for success.

I've already mentioned that for strategic mimicry, you can repeat good questions or points students make. If you're so inclined, you can also try to mimic some facial expressions, yawning and such.

Another tip is again, to climb into the student's chair: what is he thinking when I hand him this activity? What does she think about the topic of this authentic resource?

Concerning becoming an ambivert: if you're an introvert, work on more extroverted communication: practice how you'll introduce and transition, or practice a funny

comment, comparison, or short activity to give students a brain break. If you're not naturally funny, you can use YouTube to make students engage in something funny anyway. For you extroverts: talk less and ask more questions. Ask deep questions and then just listen. And affirm without too much assertion.

To help you attune more to your students, consider mapping your classroom. Who talks to whom? What's the mood like at the beginning, middle, and end of class? Also, be observant and comment positively when a student gets a haircut or glasses or gets braces off. And at the beginning of the year, do an exercise to help students find out what odd things they have in common with you and with each other. All these tips help you create a classroom that is also a community, and in a community, you'll be more effective at moving others.

So the A of the new ABCs of selling was attunement, taking the perspective of your students. The B is for Buoyancy, what Pink calls staying afloat in an ocean of rejection. People in sales hear the word "no" a lot and many times not that politely. And teachers do too. We hear it from administration, from colleagues, from students, and from parents. A couple of teachers I've worked with recently, who don't even know each other, have been facing this reluctance in their departments. One told me how she sat through a department meeting and sat dumbfounded while a colleague actually yelled at her for several minutes. The other told me that her department was so resistant to change she could certainly see that happening to her should she push for positive change in others.

To help us understand what it means to stay positive amid this rejection, Pink addresses the research that looks at before, during, and after an effort to move others. Before, he suggests we use interrogative self-talk. Self-help and motivational speakers say to pump ourselves up by telling ourselves all kinds of positive mantras before facing a challenge, but research says what really works is *asking* yourself. Like Bob the builder. Can I do it? The reason is when you try to answer the question you'll come up with strategies that will help you actually accomplish the task. Also, it will make you think about what is motivating you to complete it in the first place.

Then during the effort to move someone, consider what Pink calls the positivity ratio. Research shows that people who have more negative than positive feelings in a time period aren't effective at influencing others. The "magic ratio" seems to be 3 positive feelings for every negative one. Positive feelings can include emotions like amusement, joy, appreciation, interest, gratitude, and inspiration. In contrast, negative examples are anger and fear. When you're positive, the person you're trying to influence "catches" it and begins to want to cooperate with you.

To discuss how to be more effective after your "sales pitch," Pink talks about explanatory style. To do this he refers back to a long well-established line of research on what's

known as learned helplessness. This is people who have been discouraged so much that they've actually learned to give up easily; they think of situations as permanent, pervasive, and personal. "They believe that negative conditions will endure a long time, that the causes are universal rather than specific to the circumstances, and that they're the ones to blame." But salespeople who are optimistic in explanatory style are more effective. If you have an optimistic explanatory style, it means that after you're rejected, you explain it by giving reasons why it's temporary, why it's specific to the situation instead of a given in any situation, and why there are a lot of potential reasons it happened that don't have anything to do with you personally.

In Pink's "Sample case" for Buoyancy, he gives us some ideas on how to be more resilient even when we're feeling rejected, like we can't influence our leaders, colleagues, and students to change for the better. First, ask yourself questions about the situation. The next time you're going to face a difficult class, staff meeting, or parent conference, ask yourself, "Can I do this?" Then write down five reasons the answer is yes. This will force you to find ways to make the most positive outcome likely.

Also, to practice positivity during your "pitch" or the times you're specifically trying to influence someone, write words for positive emotions on cards, words like joy, interest, hope, inspiration, and so on. Choose one or two to display on your desk or classroom wall every day or once a week. Look at them and consciously find ways to show those emotions during the day. If you put them somewhere your kids can see them too, you'll do that much more to help them move themselves and others, also.

Finally, when things go south in the classroom, think about it differently afterward. Think about the reasons why it's not always going to be this way - hey, in our profession, we know the kids are going to leave our class in May or June. And in the even shorter term, adolescents are notorious for being a completely different person tomorrow than they were yesterday. Think about all the times it wasn't like this, that is, how specific this situation is and not the way teaching always is. If you're a first or second year teacher, believe me, you can know that it isn't always going to be this hard, and the hardest parts of teaching will become second nature to you. Third, think about all the reasons it isn't about you. I once had a big struggle with a student I liked. He said things to me that could have gotten him suspended if I'd reported them. After several difficult experiences I found out his parents were going through a nasty divorce after having been separated and then failing at reconciliation, and he blamed his mom. His coach told me he was taking it out on all the women in his life. His behavior didn't have anything to do with me personally - it was just because I was a woman. We both survived, thrived even, and he elected my advanced class, and he's doing really well today. As for the rest of Pink's buoyancy sample case, I wasn't impressed with the other suggestions, which included sending yourself a rejection letter, but you can read them there.

Okay, so first there was attunement, and then buoyancy, and the C of the new ABCs of selling is Clarity. Pink introduces it with some experiments about why we don't save enough for retirement. Research shows that we'd save more if we could actually visualize that it's ourselves we're saving for. We seem to look at it as if it were some old stranger we're saving for., because it's tough to visualize yourself old. If we visualize ourselves, we do better, because it's easier to move ourselves if we have clarity. So it's easier to move others if you offer them clarity. How this looks in practice is not to be a problem solver, but to be a problem finder. Successful sales in the 21st century comes from people who help people identify what their problem is - who give them clarity - rather than people who solve problems they think people have.

To help students have clarity, we need to frame problems differently, and this is all about comparison. Ask, compared to what? I try this all the time with my five-year-old as we encounter people who are amazed that she can speak Spanish. I say things like, "See, Zoe? They think it's so cool you can speak Spanish." "He wishes he could speak Spanish like you can." I'm trying to help her compare her attitude about Spanish -as in, she really dislikes speaking it even though she's functionally bilingual- to the attitudes other people have when they hear her. I'm hoping framing her problem in comparison to others will move her to have a more positive outlook on speaking Spanish. Well, hoping anyway- so far, no luck.

Anyway, Pink offers some tips for different ways we can reframe someone's problem.

One is the less frame: Offering fewer choices actually moves people to act more. Or we can try the experience frame: Offer in terms of experience rather than products. This is so easy in the language classroom because what we're offering opens up a world of amazing experience for students, for travel, study, friendships, and life-changing service. Another frame is the label frame: how you label problems and tasks makes a difference. When you label assignments or activities, use community-building words and phrases. Use labels that help students think of themselves in comparison to others. Or how about the blemished frame: don't be too positive. It's better to be honest about possible drawbacks rather than gush unnaturally over what we're offering. I'm not going to tell students that Spanish will win them the best job and is better than Japanese or science. I actually think my students who want to be engineers should take AP Calculus even if it conflicts with my class. I don't want students who are very communicative but struggle with accuracy and get bored with tedious authentic content to take AP Spanish. They have so much intrinsic motivation I tell them, travel, interact with the community, but don't take AP Spanish because it might kill your motivation to keep going. Being open with students about the downside helps them trust more in the upside of what we're offering.

Another way to reframe a problem is the potential frame: research shows that when

we're trying to influence people, giving the message that they're potentially good at something might be better than their actually being good at it. The easiest way to do this in language class is to applaud your students as they achieve higher levels of proficiency but to always keep their eyes on the next proficiency level. We've never arrived; on the contrary, there's always a higher place to go.

Another way to give clarity is to offer what Pink calls an off-ramp. That is, you'll be more effective at moving others if you give specific directions about how to do what you want them to do. In Pink's research example, even a group rated not very likely to donate to a food drive, when given specific directions, donated more than a group rated likely to do it, but not given the specific directions how to.

In Pink's "sample case" for clarity, here are some tips. First, help others find clarity with two irrational questions. When a student is resistant about completing something, or a colleague is resisting about adopting a change, ask, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not ready to do it, 10 being very ready to do it, where are you? Then ask this surprising question: why didn't you pick a lower number? This thought process gets the person to identify their own reasons they ought to do what you want them to do. That is - unless they choose 1. Then I'm not sure what you're supposed to do.

That really was the best tip in the sample case for clarity. Pink also recommends that you jolt your audience with the unfamiliar because clarity depends on comparison, and he talks about how you can help others find problems by curating information, and I think that curating information would, for example, involve you scanning authentic sources for fifteen minutes a day on a topic your students enjoy, and then using social bookmarking or a blog to make sense of them, organize them, and share them, so others can help you find problems of your own and solve them. If that thoroughly confused you, no worries - it did me as well. So, moving on.

Other tips for adding clarity is to ask better questions, something you'll see is critical and get lots of help with in part 2 of this book review podcast, and to ask the 5 whys: when you're helping students find clarity with a problem, whether it's motivation, behavior, or an assignment, ask why? And then every time they answer ask why? 5 times.

To find your own clarity, Pink suggests you look to identify what he calls the one percent: What 1% of everything you do in your classroom gives life to the other 99%? Finding out what this is, and helping your students see it, gives clarity. For me, I tried to put it into one phrase: respect for people. It feeds our desire to talk to students. It feeds our safe learning environment. And it feeds their desire to talk to others.

That finishes out the first two sections of the book and leaves one more: the part on what to actually do. Up to this point in the book I wasn't nearly as thrilled with it as I

was with Drive, but part 3 proved to be shades of the old Daniel Pink, incredibly applicable and helpful for the classroom. It helps us figure out how to form our pitch and even what signs we could put in our classrooms. Unfortunately, it made this podcast very long and forced me to divide it into two episodes. Be sure to listen to the rest of this review in the next episode later this month. It will cost less than a Starbucks mocha and I promise it will be worth it.

For more information about Daniel Pink and his books, visit DanPink.com. For more episodes of the Black Box, resources, the Musicuentos blog, and information about services, visit Musicuentos.com. Join in the conversation on Facebook at facebook.com/musicuentos or on Twitter at Twitter.com/blackboxpodcast. Join me next time for more of the Musicuentos Black Box podcast- it's the best of grad school without the tuition, or the homework.