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Teaching Philosophy

Latin is unique among modern languages; in that it is dead. There are no native speakers, and the few strongholds of academic Latin are slowly dying out. Even the Catholic church no longer supports Latin today like it did for millennia. The classics still exist, and we can read them, right? Yeah, we definitely can, but if we want to truly gain an appreciation for the lessons, history, and culture of the ancient Romans, we need to experience their language as they did. The current grammar-translation methods that prevail across modern Latin education is not keeping the classics alive, but on life support. This is because the current methods are not as accessible to as many people. My life has been incredibly enriched by the study of Latin and I think many others can experience that as well. The research shows that newer methods centered around Krashen's theories on comprehensible input are correct, and lead to more natural language acquisition. I aim to teach in a manner that most if not all of my students leave the class with an understanding of Latin.

I know I am effectively teaching when students are able to effectively communicate with me and with each other. I am not even extremely concerned with accuracy, just the ability to negotiate meaning. Once that negotiating meaning is possible refining grammar becomes so much easier. There are many good methods that use comprehensible input and I think these are hallmarks of successful teaching. I intend to use total physical response, personalized questions and answers, and teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling. I intend to structure my

class around me, it is my responsibility as the teacher to provide as much input for the students as possible. That way I can maximize the use of the target language. I also intend to have lots of helping objects around my classroom, this can either take the form of hand signals for my students to use to communicate, or posters with vocabulary on the wall that help students stay involved when they are confused (e.g. a poster that says “quid significat ____ = What does ____ mean?”) I also intend to have students seated in groups, that way they may more easily communicate with one another, and maximize their interactions in the target language.

Students are the priority of my classroom. I want my students to leave the classroom having been enriched by classics, and understanding more of the world than when they came in. Ultimately, I really just want my students to leave my classroom as better, more empathetic people. I hope to develop and maintain positive relationships with students through several means. I first intend to tailor my instruction to what the students need, secondly, I intend to invest time in the lives of my students. Investing time in the lives of students looks like going to school concerts or games and making sure that they feel safe and comfortable in the classroom.

I intend to seek to develop healthy relationships with my colleagues in the world language department wherever I teach. This will help me build up a network of teachers who can help me hone my craft. This also helps me build a community where I can reflect on best practices, an essential part of being able to improve as a language teacher.

I create a learning environment for my students that is conducive to experimentation. I don't really want my students to ever feel like they are failing, because when students feel bad their affective filter goes up and they check out. I want to minimize those situations. I think that

building positive relationships with students goes a long way toward building a supportive learning environment.

I feel kind of like I am my own guinea pig, as I am in various stages of learning two languages, yet I have not been exposed to many of the methods of teaching prescribed in this course. I know I am not in this situation alone; many young Latin teachers have mentioned sharing this struggle. Instructors who have talked about making the switch from grammar-translation to comprehensible input say that it is important to be always reflecting, I intend to make this my mantra as a teacher of comprehensible input. My most important learning goals for my students are that they learn how to learn, they learn to empathize with others, and they learn to understand and be more empathetic to the world around them. I think Latin is a good vehicle for those goals. I can make a difference in the lives of my students by maintaining a positive relationship, equipping them with tools for success outside of my classroom, and imparting them with more inclusive and empathetic world view. This philosophy will have to be revisited as I continue on my path towards becoming a teacher, and especially even once I become a teacher. Good teachers are always trying to become better teachers, and I aim to be always improving as I reflect.