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Teaching Philosophy

In order to effectively construct a teaching philosophy, instead of picturing the beginning of the first day of class with a new student, let's start with a vision of the goal.

I envision a student walking out of my classroom on the last day with the tools, the motivation, and the courage to continue their language learning without me, whether they are a beginning student, advanced, or somewhere in between. With that being said, I am committed to the following principles in order to reach this goal.

Tools.

First and foremost, I believe **communicative competence** to be the main objective of language instruction. Students should be learning English that can be used for real communication purposes in truly communicative settings, requiring more than just the formal linguistics of the language. Focus on sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence helps students reach the point where they are able to use the language in different settings, tasks, and functions, develop fluent speech by stringing sentences together, and avoid communication breakdown. Learner autonomy should be promoted by assisting students in learning how to learn. Learning a language is a long process, and teachers can prepare their students for that reality by equipping them with the tools they need to continue the process on their own. In order to facilitate this, explicit instruction in strategies should have a role in the classroom and then control should be handed back to the students through group work, giving students the opportunity to initiate production and solve problems using the target language on their own.

Motivation.

Most teachers would agree that students' intrinsic motivation is crucial to their success in learning a language. Considering this, getting to know my students is one of my first priorities as a teacher. Once I have identified who my learners are, I can develop a **learner-centered classroom** with curriculum that is catered to their individual needs, goals, and learner preferences. My students' objectives should help to inform my objectives because if they don't see the content as applicable, they will lose motivation. The content needs to be presented in a way that helps students create meaningful connections. New content should be taught in relation to the background knowledge students already have so that subsumption can be achieved through activating schema, helping students anchor the new information to their pre-existing organizational structures. The use of authentic materials can act as a catalyst for this process of meaningful learning, aiding students in achieving longer retention rates. This process of meaningful learning will aid students in achieving longer retention rates. Finally, creating as many opportunities for immersion inside the classroom can have a lasting impact on how students take their learning outside of the classroom.

Courage.

I am committed to communicating to my students that I respect the process of their language learning, so I hope to create an atmosphere in the classroom where mistakes are viewed as an avenue to learning success. Their interlanguage is valued rather than seen as a failed attempt at English. If students can get to the point where they believe that errors are a natural part of the process of learning English and a great opportunity for advancing that learning, they will have a better chance of developing the confidence they need to keep taking risks outside the classroom. Ultimately, developing that propensity for **risk-taking** leads to the reward of fluency and multilingual confidence.

Furthermore, I've found in my language classrooms that the promotion of cultural diversity can help students develop courage in their continual exploration of English. Language and culture cannot be separated, and the connection that cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking have to language creates a richer experience of that language. However, simply teaching 'cultural sensitivity' when approaching these cultural aspects can cause us to miss out on the richness that diversity brings. Principles of cross-cultural communication need to be brought into the classroom to encourage a shift in worldview where English doesn't promote Western culture, but is used as a medium to inclusively appreciate and respect the beauty of all cultures.