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Teaching Philosophy

Reflections from the Other Side

Over my time in academia I have been in many classrooms, both as student and teacher, and my experiences have inspired a reverence and a profound appreciation for the journey of learning. I find myself surrounded, quite often, by young teachers, like myself, who express a joy for teaching that is both infectious and inspiring, yet, I have recently come to the realization that loving to teach alone is not a recipe for excellence or success. Enthusiasm, passion, and energy are not the skeleton key to schoolroom success, and are inadequate in and of themselves. The difference between the way I taught and the way I now teach is a newfound emphasis on continuous investment in my teaching, and my students. Beyond the espousal of a communicative methodology is a belief in consistent improvement, not as a given, but as an imperative. For this reason, I end each class asking myself, what would I do differently, what was successful, what was not, and how can I use the learning experience of my students, as a learning experience for myself.

First and foremost, in order to keep the affective filters low, I foster a classroom environment that promotes a community feeling and camaraderie amongst the students. By asking my class to write and perform miniature plays centralized around restaurants and food preferences complete with fake food and props they are able to engage in an experience that is both extremely active and engaging in terms of language production as well as culturally enriching as it opens up a discussion of the ways in which "café culture," fast food, and family meals align with our own experiences. I also recognize that each student is unique, with varying learning styles and personal strengths and weaknesses-- because of this I present material in at least three different mediums using PowerPoints, various props, free-writes, and games. I strive to remain acutely conscious of my students concerns and problem areas, and create task-based activities to respond to any skills that I feel need strengthening. For example, after having noticed students struggling with question formation we did some short pre-writing and preparation activities that served as a scaffolding for them as they created their own questions that they used during a speed dating activity. Not only was this a fun and energetic day in the class, this enabled them to produce and respond to many questions in a short period of time and the difference in their abilities was marked. By practicing "Overview, Teach, Practice, Communicate," strictly with every activity I ensure that there is

never a moment where students lack the necessary framework. They always have the support necessary to construct language before I ask them to be creative on their own.

I am not perfect and I let my students know that the process of language learning is just that, a constant quest for improvement, not a straight line but a jagged one with plateaus and moments of regression but that the journey is a pleasure filled with many more "ah-ha" moments than disappointments. This honesty, coupled with availability both for meetings and via email in an extremely timely manner, creates a personal relationship of mentoring that I hope my students will remember far beyond their time in my course.

I see teaching French as an opportunity to touch the lives of people, by expanding their international understanding and cultural awareness as much as it is about personal experiences such as learning to make crepes by reading a French recipe or how to order a meal in a café. I empower my students to investigate a variety of viewpoints and lifestyles through technology, social media, and real-world documents that foster deeper cross-cultural comprehension. I view this initiation as integral to the college experience: in the foreign language classroom we have the ability to mold global citizens who will foster understanding and awareness throughout both their academic and personal lives.

In conclusion, I possess the tenacity, the determination, and intellectual curiosity to be successful in my teaching endeavors but the humility to recognize that there will always be a need for evolution and improvement. I expect to continuously develop my teaching skills by learning from my classroom experiences, students, peers, and workshops for the rest of my life and I look at this quest as an enjoyable and inspirational process.