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### Teaching Philosophy

I believe that teaching a language involves more than planning and delivering a lesson. It is an opportunity for me to connect with my students, spark their curiosity, open their mind to new cultures and practices while modeling kindness, compassion, and respect. Ritz (2021) explains how speaking a Second/Foreign language promotes problem solving, empathy, open-mindedness, and flexibility. In addition, teachers bring their culture to the classroom. They teach who they are, and their thoughts and experiences guide both their actions in the classroom, and their interactions with their students.

My philosophy evolved based on my personal experiences as a learner and a teacher of twenty-two years. I was born and raised in a multilingual country where people speak at least three languages. Throughout my learning years, my French and English teachers used traditional methods where grammar and structure were taught explicitly. However, my generation and I would argue that our English language acquisition was from American movies and songs. These were an excellent teacher to us and influenced us tremendously. Nevertheless, moving to the States has taught me that English class instruction and American movies were not enough for me, because language learning takes place outside instructed settings. Therefore, my English proficiency increased by living authentic situations and by using my critical thinking skills whether by reflecting or overcoming the challenges of an L2 journey.

As Ritz (2021) says, learning a new language is not only “nice” but rather “essential”. Learning French or/and English in Lebanon is essential for our existence and identity. Learning a language opens the gate wide for job opportunities and for life advancement.

Based on my experience in Lebanon, I know that learning a language is crucial for our existence and for advancing our life. It helps us communicate our story and life experiences to others and helps us to learn about the other. It's the vehicle to connect between cultures and this is my ultimate goal as a language teacher.

My experiences as a learner and teacher have led me to the following beliefs: Students need to communicate the language in a meaningful way and use most of their class time in collaborating within group setting or in pairs. Students will develop their cognitive and metacognitive language skills by following a disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information. This is achieved through tasks such as project-based learning (PBL) and action-oriented tasks in addition to participating in student led activities, student reflections and teacher's one on one conversations. Furthermore, critical thinking skills and open-mindedness are consistently valued through teaching methods and higher order questioning. It is a constant and organic part of the languages learning process. Developing students' intercultural awareness is a valuable approach to teaching. I try to explain to my students the differences among the Arabic countries. Being an Arabic speaker doesn't mean you are an Arab or you belong to a certain religion. Furthermore, sharing the same language doesn't mean sharing the same culture.

Factual mastery and skill development are the focus of all my introductory level classes, but critical thinking skills are still central to lessons. At higher level language courses, my students are required to employ critical thinking skills more frequently through completing interactive tasks.

In regards to evaluations, at all levels, I ensure that all my summative evaluations include a critical thinking component and I use rubrics for grading (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016).

Because our learning objectives should be aligned with the curriculum expectations of the Ministry of Education, the instructions and assessments should then match what we are teaching in class and what the students should be seeing in their assessments and evaluations. In addition, I ensure that the success criteria are also shared with the class and posted along with the learning objectives. Studies showed that students are more motivated and engaged if we highlight for them what they “should know” (learning objectives) and what they are “able to do” (success criteria) at the end of each class, lesson or unit. I strive to align my province curriculum expectations with ACTFL ‘Can Do’ statements and I include in my lessons the three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal and presentational. Moreover, the five C’s of the World- Readiness Standards of learning languages. (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2017). In addition, I use the Bloom Taxonomy to formulate my questions to include critical thinking. For example, the interpretive reading questions include comparing and analyzing, problem solving, making cultural comparisons. The presentational writing, I use ‘evaluate’ and ‘give an opinion’ etc. The presentational speaking: ‘create’, ‘critique’ etc... Some key words in questioning/assignments: Retell the story, explain your reasoning, compare, identify the main information etc. These are all examples of how to incorporate critical thinking into my teaching. Furthermore, Kabilan, (2000) argues that even communicative language teaching, which emphasizes the use of language as a communication tool, does not really help students to become proficient in the target language. He suggests that for learners to be proficient in a language, they need to be able to think creatively and critically when using the target language.

Thus, it is implied that even communicative approaches to language teaching do not develop critical thinking among learners. Therefore, my objective goes beyond the curriculum linguistic expectations because the effectiveness of language teaching will depend upon what is being taught, in addition to language, which learners can consider as a purposeful and relevant extension of their horizons (Widdowson, 1993).

Since I taught in three continuous levels from novice to advanced, I got to see students' growth and failures. Some of the techniques that I use in my teaching are the followings:

I try to track students' performances individually, and I share descriptive feedback whether in writing or in speaking with them. Moreover, I learn from my students about the techniques that I should use and techniques that I should change or eliminate. Therefore, I ask them to reflect at the end of each unit and then I revisit and adjust my instructions based on their feedback and performances. Moreover, I usually keep a chart for each student from year 1 to year 3 to monitor their growth and this helps me in building and adjusting learning objectives and success criteria. Another technique I use is the 'Role-Play' technique and I pick real-life scenarios: Viewing an authentic video, going to an Arabic restaurant and ordering food in Arabic, leaving a message on an answering machine, and taking students on a trip where they use Arabic to buy items.

I can describe my teaching style as a facilitator/personal model/formal Authority (Grasha, 1994). Therefore, I try to facilitate activities and discussion especially with senior school students while the younger groups (Upper school students) need more guidance and an authoritative style.

I feel that combining intercultural and communicative techniques is beneficial for engagement and growth. It is very interesting to realize and reflect on how my own experience as a learner

and the knowledge that I have gained as a teacher have helped to shape my teaching practices and to be aware of the positive connections that teachers must build with their students. By teaching the whole person, we need to cultivate vision, emphasize real-life application, interact with a positive attitude and contribute to building students' resilience and not only expanding their knowledge and acquisition of the language.

Teaching students to take charge of their own thinking, having them reflect on their production of ideas and their process of learning is invaluable. By exposing my students to meaningful situations that they can relate to and asking them to collaborate and to solve problems, I help with expanding their learning beyond the classroom where they can find the learning meaningful.

## References

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