My Teaching Philosophy

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Personal Beliefs

John Dewey, a famous American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer once said, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow" (Think TechEd, 2013). My interpretation of this is that students are different so teachers should get to know their students and vary their style of teaching accordingly. According to Lucariello (2013), students go to school with some prerequisite knowledge which is gained from their daily experiences and the knowledge they have acquired in other settings. Therefore, before we begin teaching, we should know the preconceptions of our students and either agree or disagree with the concepts. I would do this by initiating more and closer interactions with my students so as to know them better and thus come up with more effective teaching methods.

I believe that excellent language teachers know themselves and who their students are. The most important mission for a language teacher should be to help students achieve their goals by the end of the course and to bring them closer to the ultimate goals of learning the language. To fulfill this mission as teachers, we have to always pay attention to our students. For example it is important for us to be aware of what kind of goals our students have and what kind of materials, activities, and teaching styles suit our students. In addition, it is important to know what teachers should and can do for their students. I do think that instead of trying to control the class, as teachers we should help students to learn

effectively. My teaching beliefs are based on learner-oriented, student-centered teaching. Student-centered teaching involves the teacher focusing more on the interests of the students than those of other stakeholders in the process of education such as administrators. As a teacher I would act as a facilitator of learning using student-centered teaching to enable the students achieve their lifelong goals. While students are learning something from teachers, I believe that teachers should also learn something from students. For example as teachers, we should know the types of students we are teaching and the kind of activities or materials that motivate them well. In the next section I discuss our role as teachers in creating student-centered classrooms.

The Teacher's Role in the Classroom

I believe that one of our most significant roles in the classroom as teachers is motivating our students. When I was learning English as a foreign language in Japan, the classroom atmosphere was not positive. Most of my classmates hesitated to speak up during classroom activities and it was hard for me to have positive attitude toward learning it in such an atmosphere. However, when I was tutoring the Japanese class at Kapi'olani Community College in 2011, the students were trying to speak in Japanese through their own initiative in the classroom. The difference between the classroom in Japan and the one in Hawaii might be due to national traits. However, I also believe the classroom atmosphere that is created by teachers' behavior has a great influence on the attitudes of students towards language learning. Therefore, teachers can motivate their students well by creating a non-threatening, positive learning atmosphere. The following was a list of my ideas of

what I can do to create a good student-centered classroom atmosphere as a language teacher:

i)   Choosing lesson topics which students are interested in in accordance to their level of education, age groups and cultures. (e.g., culture, fashion, and friendship)

ii)   Leading students in interesting activities (e.g., games, role-play, presentation, and discussion) so as to enhance their understanding on certain subject matters.

iii)   Using materials which enhance students' understanding by summarizing information content so as to enable the students to draw quicker understanding on lesson topics (e.g. worksheets, and PPT)

iv)   Teaching students practical phrases (e.g., shopping, complaints, greeting, and inviting)

v)   Adopting appropriate teaching approaches, techniques, and technologies in accordance to the classroom context for instance by using projectors and microphones in classrooms with larger student population.

vi)   Observing students' reactions to the things mentioned above. If I feel something does not suit the students, I would change it and try to find a more appropriate one.

I believe that all of them help in motivating students and in creating good classroom atmosphere.

The Dignity of a Teacher

As a teacher, I would respect students since I believe that teachers should not try to

control the whole class while maintaining my dignity as a teacher since if my students regard me as an undignified teacher, I cannot lead them towards their goal. In order for me to maintain my dignity as a teacher, I would provide meaningful language instruction to my students. This means that I have to improve my teaching skills. As I described in the personal belief, students are different and therefore, I should vary my teaching style according to the students or blend my teaching style with the students' style. I would like to be a teacher who can provide an appropriate teaching style to my students. Acting diligently as a teacher will involve taking into consideration the diverse capabilities and weaknesses of my students and enable them to overcome their weaknesses so as to achieve not only academic success but also their life long goals.

In maintaining dignity as a teacher, I will also respect and obey laws, exemplify honesty as well as integrity in my workplace. I will also demonstrate dedication and commitment to teach my students and ensure all the objectives put in place are achieved successfully. I will also display exemplary academic conduct through demonstrating competence in written and oral language as this will be important in my endeavors as a language teacher to see my students emerge proficient in the areas taught.

References

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