

Personal Statement

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"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." This quote by Isaac Newton always reminds me that education is one of the most efficient and important ways to provide our learners with "the shoulders of giants". Education is about facilitating students in their learning. It is about inspiring each and every student to discover their own greatness, and maximizing the potential of them. Education is about providing students with more opportunities to be challenged and with higher probabilities to succeed. My philosophy of teaching evolved from many years of acting as either a student or a teacher. As I reflect on my beliefs regarding teaching and learning, I anchor my pedagogy in two interrelated principles.

1. Set clear learning goals and create a learner-centered classroom

At the beginning of each course, I will provide my students with clear learning goals for this course and of the criteria by which they will be evaluated. The goals are always designed to specifically target the intended learning rather than to control their activities. I also encourage students to do what they cannot yet do easily or with grace, and consequently create a dependable, yet flexible class structure that is supportive of what is necessary for their intellectual development and independence.

The role of a language teacher is more a motivator and a facilitator than a controller in the classroom. It is ideal to assume that students can regulate themselves and behave well in the class, but in reality, no matter the age group, all the students are easily get distracted and feel bored. The teacher prepared good content for the class, but they also need to motivate the students. The same content can be presented in many different ways. It is well-known that everyone likes to be the center of the world. By constructing a learner-centered classroom, the students have more chances to express themselves. The teacher can prepare

good content for the class, but the 60 minutes or 90 minutes class is limited. Also, language learning requires practice and the continuous learning after school is necessary. Understanding the learning motivation becomes crucial for both learners and teachers since it is a driven force of cautiously promoting the learning. The learners have the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of learning a second or foreign language.

2. Considers the individual needs of learners

Increasing educational researches have generally revealed the wide disparity in student characteristics, including interest, personality traits, rate of learning, memory, motivation and general intellectual ability (Morgan & Daniel, 1980, p23). And “it seems unlikely that one set of teacher behaviors is most effective for teaching everything to everybody” (Heath & Nielson, 1974, p447). This fundamental rationale and my strong demand for individualized teaching whenever acting as a student in the classroom constitutively motivate me to move from the concept of group-based instruction on a common curriculum toward instructional programs which attempt to meet the individual differences and needs of my students.

Perhaps every teacher wants to discover exactly how to teach a skill, whether it be learning Chinese language or solid geometry. However, this hope could be forlorn when encountering the reality that the best way to learn is not the same for every learner. There can be many good ways to teach a skill, but every approach has its specialized target users. As a teacher, I always believe that each student is unique and should be valued. Each could be a different type of learner with different fortes and aptitudes, still the differences should be respected.

It is natural that students will be shy in a language class due to the fear of making mistakes. Hence, I aim to make the classroom a comfortable place for my students to make interaction with me and their classmates. I ask provocative questions and wait for response. I respect every different yet thoughtful answer rather than preach the standard answer. I try to keep my lectures flexible enough

in order to maintain the interests of students and evoke every valued and unique thought in the classroom. Most importantly, I demonstrate my interest on students and their valuable ideas. It is essential to develop a positive teacher-student relationship by caring the well-being of students and understanding the difficulties they came across during the studying. In this sense, I maintain an open-door policy and encourage students come to and discuss their difficulties with me.

3. Conclusion

Teaching is a joy for me and I always could get a sense of achievement when I see students could master a foreign language so well. Although many of the pedagogies above may work well in my course, I still look for ways in which to improve my teaching skills. For instance, I believe that the practicum has long been acknowledged as the most powerful and memorable aspect of student learning across many disciplines. In this regard, I need continually find more effective and efficient ways to motivate students to actively participate in the interaction in the classroom.

My teaching philosophy and practice is driven by designing and executing a pedagogy in every learning encounter that will inspire, empower and encourage students, and motivate them to become better learners and ultimately better Chinese speakers.