Mindy Medrana

Teaching Philosophy

 Language learning is a highly personal and interactive process. After all, the purpose of language is to exchange ideas and emotions. Whether that means transferring ideas onto paper or conversing face to face, using language to accurately and effectively communicate is an advanced skill. With that in mind, my teaching philosophy takes on the focus of guided interaction as opposed to rote memorization and drills. While drills may be useful in learning the basics of a language, the ultimate goal is to develop the skills necessary to express individual thought in all its intricacies and variations. Since there exists a great diversity in thought among individuals, I make a point in creating a safe environment for students to share their ideas and experiences in the target language. Language learning may feel awkward at first, but regular informal assessments will serve to provide periodic feedback for students to develop their language comprehension and usage.

In order to promote effective language acquisition, the theoretical concepts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) will be applied. CLT emphasizes the use of language as an interactive device and draws on 4 communicative competencies: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse. Classroom application of improving grammatical competency may look like learning the mechanics of a conditional statement. With knowledge on how to construct a conditional statement, students can then connect ideas in an “if A, then B” structure, thus improving discourse competency. In adjusting to context such as using formal speech – which would integrate sociolinguistic competency – students can transform the use of conditional statements for specific purposes, such as clarying (e.g., if Google is down, how else can I research?), which is an application of strategic competency. Since these competencies overlap in real-life situations, the activities I employ will focus on at least 2 competencies as students interact with each other and/or any authentic material prepared. TBL also emphasizes the interactive purpose of language but adds a component of scaffolding, in which students are challenged to develop their abilities with the support of the teacher. An example lesson integrating both of these concepts may look like students learning new vocabulary so they can fully comprehend and discuss a newspaper article on vaccination. The authentic material (e.g., newspaper article) and tasks (e.g., reading, discussing) employed will ensure that students practice real-life situations they are likely to encounter.

I understand that each student’s learning journey may be different so I set my classroom and teaching materials to be as supportive as possible. As I work to nurture the learning process of my students, I expect students to also support each other as classmates. Appropriate interaction will be stressed for optimal language learning. In order to achieve this optimal learning, multiple language skills will be carefully integrated into each lesson. At least two skills will be the focal practices at a time since each skill has a counterpart that promotes feedback for the skill in practice. For instance, a language learner can check their own writing skills by reading over what they wrote and in practicing their reading comprehension skills, they can provide feedback on the writing. This introspective process that lets students develop multiple skills simultaneously is a more natural way to learn as opposed to focusing on one skill at a time since it would be incomplete for one skill to exist without its counterpart. As multiple skills will be addressed each class, there also will be opportunity for multiple informal assessments to make sure students are learning at an achievable yet appropriately challenging rate. Informal assessments will take place as teacher discussions, checklists, quizzes, etc. A significant component of a successful ESL classroom to me is the accessibility of the teacher as a source of support for the students. As such, students are encouraged to pose any concerns and questions to me and I will do my best with the resources available to me to address each of those concerns and questions.