

## My Teaching Philosophy

I am passionate about language teaching because I can inspire students to be confident in their own capabilities and achieve their goals with a better understanding of cultural diversity. My approach to language teaching is based on the following principles: first, my commitment to creating a horizontal interaction with students that facilitates the monitoring of progress; second, my interest in language as a tool for expressiveness in dynamic contexts; and, third, my emphasis on the humanistic and cultural dimension of language instruction.

I strive to create a collaborative, enthusiastic, and comfortable learning environment. To obtain this, I believe that the professor can't be the sole authority directing the learning progress; rather, I place the main responsibility for this on the students. Consequently, I view my role in the class as a facilitator of learning. In my classroom, I give especial importance to task oriented activities, since they allow the use of vocabulary and grammar as part of an effort build upon constant dialogue. I *moderate*, instead of *direct*, their individual and group performance on a daily basis, while bringing enthusiasm to these exchanges. This kind of interactive, dynamic learning creates an environment in which students feel comfortable interacting with me and with each other. They are more willing to take risks in language production because I constantly emphasize that making and correcting mistakes is an integral part of the learning process.

An important component of my communicative approach to language is my use of grammar as a tool for expressiveness. Too often, grammar has been considered a dry and decontextualized subject. However, I view grammar as part of learning that allows students to take full advantage of their linguistic creativity. Learning a new language is learning how to think for speaking in that language in a myriad of situations. I encourage my students to use common grammatical conventions and at the same time to explore their more creative uses, which exemplify the flexibility of language depending on a given situation. I give grammar concrete relevance by studying it in context—in a story, poem, song, etc. I guide students through an understanding of the main ideas, and encourage them to interact with their peers as well, all while focusing on linguistic structures.

In order to achieve this kind of flexible and creative grammatical knowledge, I search for ways to make the material and the activity salient to the students. I believe that the use of on-line based information technology encourages more creative uses of languages as well. It creates a very specific communication setting available to many different speakers at the same time. Also, I make constant use of scaffolding the lesson and background knowledge from students in order to complete their activities. A new topic must be immediately connected to previous ones.

Furthermore, my approach to teaching emphasizes cultural topics. My class is a space in which students learn to think about life from new perspectives and to question their assumptions. In my Spanish language classes, I include conversation topics that illustrate the differences and similarities between cultures in the Hispanic World and in the USA. In doing so, I reinforce critical thinking, as well as motivate my students to ask themselves who they are and what they want to do with the knowledge they acquire.

To conclude, I teach my students that language matters. From the most basic grammatical concepts to debates about citizenship, I teach my students a language that is contextualized and dynamic, that is the product of diverse communities as well as a natural vehicle for imagination. I teach language to help students become capable of creating meaning, not only for themselves but also to share with others.