

As a student, I had an innate interest in languages and language learning, although I cannot say that any of my teachers really helped to develop or foster such interest. In fact, I am often surprised that I did take such a liking to it, as my classroom experiences were usually dull, draining, and for the most part, lifeless. Fortunately, prior to starting high school, I had traveled to Mexico for two weeks. It was during that time that my interest in Spanish language and culture was piqued and the subsequent, rather boring classes that followed in high school never accurately reflected the way I had experienced and seen the language in use during my travels.

For me, language learning was not satisfying until I was able to express thoughts and discuss cultural, historical, and philosophical ideas as I would in my first language. This finally happened when I entered the intermediate Spanish classes in undergraduate, but rarely before then. I did not have full command or use of the language until I studied abroad during my sophomore year of college. This opportunity enabled me to see the value in students being fully immersed in the other language and culture they are learning. As I studied abroad, I had professors who required us to participate in life outside of the classroom. We were assigned to take trips to marketplaces and museums, and then we had to come back and write or speak about them. This created further learning opportunities that I might not have had if my professors did not require the trips of me. I recognize that not all second language learners are able to see the language in use when they begin their studies. Some will never be able to experience speaking and using their L2 in a native context. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers bring the outside world into the classroom by using as many authentic materials as possible.

Language teaching must include an enormous amount of enthusiasm in the classroom. To me, the most engaging and rewarding part of teaching a language is providing students with the tools to communicate and develop new relationships with other speakers of that language. To impart students with these tools, I believe that learners must be taught to pay attention to form and examine how form and meaning are connected (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). When students are asked to negotiate these interactions by using small group activities, they are able to notice more and make their own meaning. My goal as an educator is for my student to develop a language awareness that they will be able to use not only inside the classroom, but they will be given the tools to help them construct meaning whenever they are using their new language.

Learning a language is undoubtedly an arduous, trying process. As a learner, I recognize that students often feel as if they are retreating before they discover that they are making any real process. Often, with second language acquisition, errors are corrected but then they are repeatedly committed, even after being corrected. This can easily attribute to learner frustration, so the teacher must ensure that the classroom is a comfortable, friendly environment in which students have a good deal of autonomy over their learning and ownership of the class. The language classroom should be a place where students feel safe to express themselves and they do not feel fearful or embarrassed to make mistakes. Teachers must continually ask for student feedback and allow students to make choices about classroom activities, the direction of the class, and integrate their personal goals into the course syllabi.

The classroom should be seen as a greater extension of the language world and real life language learning activities and strategies must daily be incorporated to make the language relevant and interesting to students' lives. Furthermore, the teacher and other students in the classroom must take into consideration the viewpoints, backgrounds, and prior knowledge that others in the class have in order to enhance the learning in the classroom. Students in the class should be responsible for directing a great deal of the student learning. Therefore, they must be encouraged to take into account the identity of their classmates when disseminating and sharing information.

All students' backgrounds, needs, prior experiences, and current struggles have to be considered when planning each lesson. In order to ensure that each students' needs and preferences are incorporated into a course, teachers must develop a relevant needs analysis, which will enable students to participate in the development of the course, considering their needs, and taking control for their learning by imparting learners and teachers with a way to dialogue about their direction and the direction of the course (Graves, 2000). Because teachers must balance both planning teaching and mediating learning, teachers should use assessment tools and their reflection to reconstruct their syllabus if need be (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). As a learner, I cannot recall a single instance in which a teacher or professor asked me what my goals were for studying the language. I cannot imagine how much my motivation would have increased if I knew that the course had specifically been tailored to meet mine and my classmates' needs and considered our goals. I would like to develop better tools to assess, track, and measure student performance. Data driven assessment is very popular with organizations like

Teach for America and charter schools. I am curious to see what effects data driven assessment could have on the adult education population and how implementing such data-driven instruction could be used to help teachers alter their class syllabi accordingly.

In order to be most effective, teachers must consistently engage in reflection, of their own practices and of their past language learning experiences. By continually reflecting on what happens in the classroom, teachers are able to make changes to suit their students' needs (Richards, 1991). Then, those changes are evaluated and reflected upon as well, resulting in a continuous state of evaluation and examination. As a teacher, I find that keeping a journal is the most useful way for me to ensure that I am reflecting on the processes and practices that occur in the classroom.

I believe that these teaching philosophies, when properly implemented and effectively applied, will lead learners to perform more efficiently and enable them to furthermore develop their language abilities inside as well as outside of the classroom.

#### References

Graves, K. (2000). *Designing Language Courses: A Guide for Teachers*. Heinle. Boston.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The post-method condition: (E)merging conditions for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly* 28(1), 27-48.

Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T.S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*,  
2nd Edition. Cambridge University Press. (p. 207-222).