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My Teaching Philosophy

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Why are some language learners successful and some are not? This question has been appealing for language teachers and researchers. Studies on this question result in theoretical development and pedagogical changes. I believe in learner-centered principle, and sum up my teaching philosophy in four words: communicative, understanding, passion, expectation, and affect, in acronym, CUPEA.

Communicative

Among a variety of teaching methods, I use all in my teaching but centered on communicative teaching method. Based on our knowledge of how a language is acquired, we are sure that no single method is perfect. Each of them captures a specific perspective of how a language is acquired, and provides practical guidance just addressing that perspective. However, if a teacher overuses a single method, he will not be able to make good use of learners’ multiple intelligences. I believe that teaching should embrace different methods according to contents, activities, objectives and levels. My teaching methods are a combination of different ones with communicative method most prominent.

Understanding

Understanding students is very critical. What of students shall a teacher go to understand? There is always one thing I think I need to know about my students, that is what they have known. Krashen proposed “i+1” principle. I know their “i” through evaluations and observations. By knowing what they know, I challenge students with tasks of difficulty level appropriately beyond their current point. I also want to understand their thoughts and motivation on learning Chinese through survey in the beginning of the study. By knowing how they think and who they are, I make the tasks tap into their interest, allowing the learning challenging but relative and manageable. In his way, new learning occurs and previous learning is reinforced. Learning turns out to be a dynamic chain which expands piece by piece.

Passion

Teachers’ passion is critical to motivate students and themselves. My passion often comes from seeing my students make achievement. I know this for sure and so design various learning activities to keep classes educational and enjoyable. When the students have passion for learning, I have even more passion for teaching.
Expectation

I believe high expectations of teachers lead to high achievements of students. Expectation of teachers determines what learners will become. High expectations convey students the message that they are great students. When students make high achievements, they appreciate your high expectations for them. To make sure that my students can meet my expectations, I clearly elaborate each requirement, diligently monitor their progress, and timely make necessary adjustments.

Affect

Affect is an agreed-upon factor influencing learning outcomes. Learners’ motivation and attitudes are two aspects I consider in my teaching. According to established research, attitudes toward target language community have strong relationship to motivation. I ask myself what causes learners to have negative attitudes toward target language community. I believe cultural unawareness and/or misunderstanding is one cause. Therefore I apply cultural contents into language teaching. This is the way to help students relate the language to people, and relate people to them. The appropriate understanding of target culture establishes positive attitudes toward target language people.

In conclusion, my teaching philosophy is reflected through CUPEA which stands for communicative, understanding, passion, expectation and affect. This philosophy documents learner-centered theory.