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Statement of Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

Coming from a family tradition of teachers, my perception of teaching has always been influenced by the teachings of my parents. As a matter of fact, they have taught me that teaching requires effort as well as compromise. Sometimes one has to set one’s personal engagements aside to take care of one’s duties as a teacher. My first mentors in the teaching profession, my parents, have also taught me to realize that teaching is a career that requires compromise on behalf of one’s life (i.e., vocation). These teachings and knowledge acquired from my training as a teacher and researcher have molded my philosophy of teaching and learning. Five major areas define my teaching philosophy: professionalism, humanism, positivism, teamwork, and objectivity. In other words, I am a constructivist.

My view of teaching is that of a profession that brings joy and rewards to my life. I enjoy teaching because, by doing so, I help to open paths to new horizons. It has helped me to look into new worlds of knowledge. In my early years as a language instructor, I worked with students at the high school level. This task was challenging and joyful, because I was able to see that teens are people with real problems and preoccupations. I was able to look at their problems and understand what they were going through. By helping them to deal with their personal problems, I was able to have them concentrate on the learning of a new language and their differences in learning styles. As my career advanced, and I moved from teaching teenagers to teaching adults, I discovered the challenge attached to the teaching of adults. Adults’ perceptions of the world are already molded, and they have very focused goals. When learning a foreign language or a new topic, they require more explanations regarding the nature of the phenomenon and the approach to it (i.e., critical thinking). Being able to work with adults and their natural way of inquiry has expanded the way that I approach my learning and modify my teaching. I have to be in a position to be able to answer a question regarding why we, as linguists, do things the way we do. I also have to be able to promote learning through hands-on experiences in the classroom in order for learners to discover for themselves why things are done a certain way. Thus, I identify what external and internal factors affect learning in the classroom and try to use them to
the aid learning, instead. I also promote learning through inquiry and analysis of one’s own view of the world.

Not only is teaching an enjoyable experience for me, I tie it to the lifelong nature of learning. I help students understand that we live only once and that we have to live life and learn from what it gives to us. I also inculcate in them that what we learn today will help us face the problems of tomorrow. In order to live by this standard, I always like to face my personal problems with a smile and learn the best from every single one of these problems. This practice has lead me to have a very objective and levelheaded approach to the teaching-learning cycle that allows me to help students, through the experiences in my class, to solve problems in a more natural way. As a result, I consider myself a very conscientious teacher who works with human beings who are affected by how I project myself, and I focus my teaching on the fact that it is tied to very nature of languages: tools for proper communication and cultural understanding.

Through my years of experience and as a sociolinguist, I have discovered the importance of teamwork, and how we are all important players of the teaching-learning team. Communication among colleagues is crucial and when this communication is broken the learning process is hindered at all levels. Thus, I approach my classroom experience with the premise that my students are not only my pupils; they are also my future colleagues. It is my belief that good teamwork influences my teaching. It influences it because it matches my skills and how I see the interactions in and outside the classroom. By keeping good relationships with my colleagues, I work for the improvement of my teaching by adding others’ perspectives to my lessons through the addition of the special knowledge that they offer.

In sum, different teachers have different philosophies, but there are several universals that define a master teacher. As I reflect here, I find several of these in me. What define me as a teacher are universal characteristics we find in the profession. These characteristics are that I learn from my own experience in order to improve my teaching (professionalism and constructivism) and that I possess a great amount of patience to work with others to guide and promote learning in an informed way (objectivity and positivism). I am also a team-worker and understand the underpinnings of human behavior and use it to promote a healthy learning and work environment (community and leadership).