

*Statement of teaching philosophy*  
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During my undergraduate education I was disappointed to see how common it was to see extremely competent scholars who were unable to carry their message across even to the most eager students. As a beginning teacher, I started wondering how much fascinating research goes unnoticed to the general public just because so many researchers cannot reach this public. It was then that I made a commitment to myself to be the best teacher I could of whatever it is I decided to choose as a career. I believe that there is no learning without teaching and no teaching without learning. This personal maxim is always behind my attitudes toward teaching and learning.

First of all, one of the best ways to make sure my students are learning is to ask them to share the content with one another. When we can elaborate on a topic enough to be able to explain it to someone else, I believe this is a good indicator that we have actually learned that topic. This is why I constantly ask my students to work with one another during classes; if they are able to carry out a task collaboratively, I get reassured that they have understood enough of the topic in question to be able to discuss it, agreeing or disagreeing with their partner or team mates as needed. Because teaching one another is such a central part of my philosophy, I make a point of including it in my assessment of the students. Participation always counts for at least 20% of their final grade and so do homework assignments, so that the process of learning is reflected in their final grade as much as the product of it.

Most of the students that take Linguistics courses at the undergraduate level do not major in the discipline; they are taking the course to satisfy some requirement, especially because language interfaces with aspects of so many other disciplines. This diversity of backgrounds presents a challenge to any instructor, who needs to get to know where these students are coming from and what they expect from the course. With this in mind, my main goal is always to ensure students are able to relate what they learn to their own personal interests. In order to do this more effectively, I always do some kind of survey in the beginning of a course to find out what their backgrounds and interests are. In particular, I like to know if they speak other languages so that I can try to bring up examples from these languages. Likewise, if they speak different varieties of English they can help me illustrate several points of the lessons.

Another challenge for a Linguistics instructor is that studying language scientifically is a relatively new field, so there is a lot of misunderstanding. Therefore, another goal I always set for my students is that they will be able to evaluate claims about language that they hear from other people and especially from the media.

Back to my personal maxim, its second part is that there is no teaching without learning. A teacher can be a learner in many ways: by learning more about her subject matter; by working on improving her teaching; and just as important, by listening and paying attention to her students. My ongoing learning process as a teacher comes not just from my formal education and courses I have taken, but also from listening to my students as a way of learning from them. Besides what students tell me directly, I always include opportunities for anonymous feedback through online surveys or quick remarks I ask them to write in the last few minutes of class. Here are a few things that my students have taught me: that my passion for Linguistics is contagious; that I should make sure I am actually listening and not just trying to be encouraging; that if I want to have discipline in class I have to be disciplined myself; that not everyone learns the same way. I am particularly pleased when I get a direct negative comment from a student, as this reflects how comfortable my students are with expressing their opinions to me.

In conclusion, half of what makes teaching attractive to me is this potential to learn and help others learn. The other half is the ability to share with others what I feel passionate about. Research is meaningless if it is not shared with others, and I believe that it is incomplete if not shared beyond a circle of specialists.