Teaching Philosophy

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." ~Maya Angelou

I whole-heartedly believe in this amazing woman's epiphany about the interaction between people. As an aspiring teacher of English in a foreign country, and the emphasis I make on communication and interaction through language, this serves as a strong foundation for my philosophy. As I look back at my academic career throughout the years, I find it absolutely true that the teachers who made the effort for me to learn by way of enthusiasm, sensitivity and devotion to their jobs extended beyond a job and became a life-long mission and a reflection of their character. I believe that sensitivity and consideration are feelings that are integral to being an effective teacher.

In addition to relevance and application, I believe that sensitivity and validation of a student's needs and feelings are the stepping stones to triggering to that student's motivation. My students may forget the language structure that I teach them but I am certainly hoping that they will never forget the teacher who showed that he or she cared about the student's future and well-being, and the encouragement he gave when students could not believe in themselves. Perhaps with that extra push of care and validation, students may associate more of the content that I teach them with my character and thus will be able to acquire and apply what I teach them into their own personal lives.

Personalization and application of language

and other life-long lessons

In order to supplement motivation and interaction, I believe it is also important to personalize the language students will learn, and make some sort of connection with it to their identity. In order for students to understand what I mean by this, I will serve as a model and will present my own form of the English language and culture in a way that I find valuable.

One example of this is through the use of motivational quotes, the very same way I've opened this statement with. Quotes serve usefulness for a number of reasons. First of all, it provides linguistic information for students to break down and consider; "What does that word mean?", "What does that phrase or sentence mean?". Second, once students understand the linguistic meaning, whether that is done by way of asking me or using it as an example in a lesson, or if they figured it out on their own, then students can ponder why that person made that quote, and what that person represents. This can further extend to a peering into the life, time and place that that person comes from, the opposition he or she may have faced and so on. Lastly, quotes like these posted on the walls in my classroom will show that I agree with what that person said, and will have identified what makes them successful or valuable in my eyes. Agreeing on such notions finally extends to me, their teacher as a reflection of who I am and ultimately aids my teaching philosophy.

Likewise, I believe that this serves as an excellent activity for students to personalize with the language, culture and self by looking for quotes they find inspiring or empowering, and have them post them on the wall as well, truly sustaining a sanctuary that I would want that classroom to represent. Further extending such an activity, personalizing language like this could very well serve as an activity for homework in and of itself, requiring students to find what is valuable to them and learning more about the person who made that quote, as well as the culture and life that that person has or had.

From the beginning of my career as an aspiring teacher, I've never thought it to be enough to simply teach content to students, and have them demonstrate their understanding of it on tests and projects. I feel like teaching is more than just that. In order for me to be a successful teacher, it is imperative that I express care and sensitivity to student's needs. Imperative, that I motivate them in some way and aid them in their journey of finding more about not just the content, but about their identity and application of such content to that identity.

One way that I could keep in touch with students on a personal level is to implement the use of journals to reflect their experiences in the class, with me, with the lessons, and so on. A student may feel shy having to share a concern or ask a question in front of other students, but by using an interactive journal and assuring them that I'm the only one reading it, students will be more comfortable opening up more, and with a student-focused teaching methodology in play, I can further build off my student's needs and help him or her as soon as possible.

I believe in providing not just a classroom, but a sanctuary in which students can feel safe to express themselves in ways that uplift and encourage. A sanctuary where it is

okay to make mistakes as long as students learn from them. I believe that in order for students to learn, they must first feel comfortable but motivated, challenged but inspired and that they will move on to the next level with hope and belief in their own ability and finally serve as fellow vessels of positive energy equipped with, if anything, the tool of language and its interactive power.