Teaching Philosophy Statement for the ESL/EFL Context

Jee Eun Park

Colorado State University
Teaching Philosophy Statement for the ESL/EFL Context

I taught for many years as an EFL teacher in Korea. Although I enjoy teaching with a constant passion, teaching is still a challenge and I am always working to improve my abilities. I believe that my teaching has been getting better with my ceaseless endeavor. Through my thoughtful self-reflection on my teaching, I have come to consider the following to be the most important qualities of my teaching.

**Enthusiasm for Teaching**

People do not have an agreed opinion on the characteristics of a good teacher and some people say that a good teacher should have self-confidence, a sense of humor and patience. From my teaching experience, I believe that the most important characteristic of a good teacher is a passion for teaching. Since I taught my youngest brother when I was in middle school, tutored high school students when I was in college, and taught Korean EFL students after I became a public school EFL teacher, I have had a strong passion for teaching. I have always enjoyed teaching.

Whenever I taught, I was rewarded with the feeling that I made a contribution to someone’s affective and cognitive development. I believe my enthusiasm for teaching has had a vital and positive influence on my students. I feel that my students become more motivated and more encouraged to learn harder and more deeply when they recognize my passion for their progress and success through my teaching.
**Staying Current with Research in the Field**

Once a teacher develops a passion for teaching, I think that it is critically important to remain up to date with current research in the field. As I majored in TESOL many years ago in Korea, my expertise as an EFL professional needs to be improved because language teaching and learning are constantly evolving. During my TEFL/TESL program at Colorado State University, I was able to broaden and deepen my professional knowledge about teaching English as a second/foreign language in the area of phonology, morphology, syntax, ESL teaching, bilingual education, ESL assessment and research methods.

In addition, through my time at CSU, I had opportunities to apply those current research studies to my teaching practicum. For example, I used research on ESL teaching approaches and methodologies to design and implement my practicum lessons. I developed and used various assessments such as a placement assessment, formative assessments, and a summative assessment during my internship teaching by adjusting research on ESL assessment. Research on bilingual education and social justice in ESL classrooms helped me design and implement a field-based literacy project, which aimed to foster cultural awareness in Fort Collins school communities.

**Balanced Teaching Method**

In order to be an effective ESL/EFL teacher, it is critical for me to develop various skills and strategies with which I can help ESL/EFL learners develop English as a social and an academic language in the four language domains (speaking, listening, reading and writing). To do that, as an ESL/EFL teacher, I should be well aware of current teaching approaches. At the same time, I should have a general understanding about advantages and disadvantages of various
kinds of teaching approaches, methods, and strategies, and improve my own critical judgment in implementing a specific method appropriate for a specific teaching context.

I believe that the primary goal of ESL/EFL teaching is to help learners communicate in the target language in the real world, so ESL/EFL teaching and learning activities in the classroom should be meaningful communication in an authentic context. My language learning and teaching experience in Korea reinforced this belief; language teaching should help learners to improve their accuracy and fluency with balance. I believe too much focus on accuracy of grammar-translation methods during my English learning and a lack of opportunity to practically apply language knowledge in authentic contexts in current Korean EFL classrooms have led EFL learners like me and current Korean students to fail to improve their communicative competence and confidence. In my classroom, I will try to provide various activities that encourage my students to use the target language actively and meaningfully such as question-and-answers, role-plays, information-gap activities, and discussions. Those activities, I believe, will facilitate meaningful interaction and offer my students ample opportunities to process meaningful input and produce meaningful output and in the end develop their communicative competence.

Assessment Expertise

As assessment is a systematic process that plays a significant role in effective teaching, I believe that language teachers should have the professional ability to understand fundamental assessment issues; to plan and construct reliable, valid, and practical tests; and to interpret the statistical results of language tests. The TEFL/TESL MA program at Colorado State University gave me an important opportunity to improve my ability in all of these facets of assessment.
My study at CSU also helped me shape my teaching beliefs regarding TEFL/TESL assessment. I believe that the more closely assessment tasks resemble authentic English use contexts and also instruction activities, the more likely the tasks are to accurately assess what has been taught and learned. So language ability should be assessed more holistically, functionally, and communicatively rather than discretely.

**Respect of Learner’s Cultural Diversity**

As language and culture are inextricably connected, it should not be considered less important for language teachers to understand and respect students’ linguistic and ethnic backgrounds as well as students’ learning styles and motivation for language learning. I am well aware of that language and culture interact in students’ cultural identities, which in turn play an important role in their academic success. As my future classrooms will contain a homogeneous Korean culture, I also know that I should try to provide my students opportunities to experience and respect cultural diversities through culturally appropriate instruction. I try to avoid language stereotyping by providing many English varieties as well as Standard English.

**Conclusion**

I know that becoming an effective, powerful, and competent EFL/ESL teacher is an ongoing process. I should be willing to cooperate among teaching and learning stakeholders, such as administrators, researchers, teacher colleagues, students, and parents because I know how beneficial cooperative teaching can be. I believe I will be provided with the perspective and experiences I need if I am willing to respond to the realities of their world, a changing world in which the old ways of language teaching may not be the best ways any more.