

French Teaching Philosophy

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Learning anything can be an interesting challenge for its own sake, but learning a foreign language can be exciting. As a teacher, I have learned that the lesson must connect with the students. It is not the teacher's objective to deliver a perfect lesson plan, but rather to guide students to a new level starting from where they are. Ideally, the teacher would plan out the entire year's learning goals, and meet with colleagues teaching the same language to share ideas and ensure each year's content prepares the next.

The most effective way to teach foreign language, in a distracted culture, is to ensure that each lesson contains a mix of substance, structure, competition, and social activities. I believe in the benefits of fun and creative play to the human learner and thinker. My lessons usually include a warm-up; the demonstration of a language skill, focused on its communicative purpose, along with a grammar explanation; an opportunity to practice the new skill (whether in a repetitive, social, musical, or competitive way); and an "exit ticket." A typical class also often includes a skit, and/or listening to a recording or a video of native speakers or singers; and opportunities to speak, write, read, and sing. I quiz students each time a new concept is introduced, and follow up with testing and review units. My students in more advanced classes complete, with help, a portfolio that counts toward their final grade.

In the classroom, I hold that gender and related questions are not of general interest since gender is irrelevant in most professional contexts. The subject of the class is language, and best practices require focusing on the French language in class.

With respect to AI, learning to use it is not the same as learning to speak a foreign language, or learning to how to learn anything, for that matter. Learning Management Systems are helpful, but not as helpful as manners, patience, cooperation, or humility. Finally, good schools prepare students for the world market, without succumbing to trends or sales pitches themselves. One should not, in the classroom, be forced to buy or help business sales. I would forfeit free time to vet a textbook carefully alongside skilled colleagues before its adoption.

Finally, the best part about language teaching and learning is language's dazzling possibilities, ranging from completing the purchase of a souvenir to collaborating on an international project to engaging thousands of minds by writing a successful novel. Learning a foreign language can enrich one's life immeasurably, and it all begins for some with a simple "*Bonjour!*"