

Patrick's Teaching Philosophy

I'd like to apply my experience as a second language learner to my teaching in order to help or guide students to learn English. I was born and raised in Japan. My mother speaks English to me, but I hadn't responded in English, so I started to speak English when I moved to Hawaii when I was 15 years old. In order to teach English, I suggest students to identify their goal first and having lesson with various activities using content familiar to students.

Setting up individual goal

In order to motivate students, setting up a goal is important. Many English learners' goal might be "to be able to speak as native speaker." It may be achievable but it consumes very hard work to become native level. However, for those whose goal is just to communicate with English speakers it won't require as much skill or knowledge as compared to academic English. Adolescence is considered as too late to acquire language according to critical period hypothesis, but it only refers to pronunciation and learning language naturally like children do. After the critical period people have hard time to learn language like children, but they can still learn language. Until I attended high school in Hawaii, I only had English class in school as a regular junior high school student, but still I could acquire English and be able to communicate in English, so it is not too late to learn English. Actually, if people are cognitively developed, they can connect their first language with second language learning and more likely to succeed. Actually learning second language late is not disadvantage. Thus, setting up clear goal help students to see how much English skill is required to attain their goal. It will help to motivate students rather than overwhelming by not having clear picture in mind and imagining they need to learn all vocabulary and knowledge.

Various activities

Having a variety of activities is another way to motivate learners. Traditional grammar-translation method would not be interesting for learners who want to learn to speak English. One way of adding variety to activities is using technology. Teacher can use low technology such as video or CD for learning language by listening or seeing realistic conversation. If teacher use high technology such as computer, there are so many things can do. Now it is easy to find resources which can be used in classroom such as texts or sound files of interaction in English. Furthermore, students can use their English in real life by having chatting or posting comments on web. Students can easily have conversations with native speakers on online. Learning language is not only one way, there are multiple ways to learn language. Thus, the teacher should have various activities for students to figure out their best way to learn language.

Although technology is very useful, teacher should not depend too much. Even though technology is developing, traditional lesson is still important. It is important to have face to face interaction within the classroom to create good rapport and teacher needs to make sure every student has the equipment to access to the internet. The teacher should treat every student equally so they need to have another plan for students who don't have online access. Even without computer, there are many ways to have various activities.

Using familiar contents

Since English is an international language and used everywhere, it is better not to use foreign culture to teach English. English is not always used for communicating with American or British people. It is possible to communicate with Chinese or Spanish people in English. Therefore, English should be taught by relating to familiar culture, so learners have better understanding and interest. If the topic is about holidays, rather than talking about Thanksgiving, I should talk about Golden Week for Japanese students.

Since Japanese language consist a lot of borrowed word especially from English, it will be effective to use loanwords for English vocabulary learning. Also, using subcultural context such as music or games may help to motivate students. In Japanese pop music, so many English words or phrases are used in the lyrics, so looking at the lyrics and figuring out the meaning would help students to expand knowledge of English vocabulary. Teachers could also use TV games or some other context where English words are used. English words can be found in so many places in Japan. Therefore, finding English words from the fields which students are interested in may motivate and expand knowledge with fun.

Conclusion

For a language teacher, it would be important to have students' perspective to know what they want to learn, what they want to do, or how they want to learn. Language teacher should not forget the time when they were learning a language because it will be a significant resource and the experience as a language learner can help students to succeed in learning language.