

A teacher's work: motivational effect

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Most of my work as a teacher involves inspiring interest in the subject for my students. I find it really helpful to tell stories to them.

The motivational effect is a key factor for any teacher's work, therefore at the beginning of my class, I try to describe the settings and later make use of characters they feel identified with.

The contents I must teach are included in this story- telling approach. I try to develop ideas and ask my students for more details, depending on the story plot. After I tell the ending, I give instructions for next day's homework so my students are supposed to collect similar information based on their own research.

When they learn the most is when they have the chance to choose one of some given topics and work on a presentation that can be discussed in front of the class. It is important to make use of their creativity and let them have some fun.

An example of a motivational class I've recently worked on, is this one:

1. Elicit vocabulary related to local EDUCATION
2. Advantages and disadvantages of different local teaching styles.
3. Story telling: Kathy´s Experiences on an” EXCHANGE STUDENT PROGRAM: A foreign student in UK”. I tell her story and show images about this girl from Chile who decided to go on an exchange student program and studied in a British High School for some months.
4. Difficulties Kathy had to go through? Dissapointments?.
5. Achievements in her new school.
6. Social Life and Roommates activities.
7. Conclusions: Education is different in the UK.
8. Homework: Research on one of the following topics: Distance Learning-Studying abroad – Outdoors learning – Online learning -Multiage classes – Homeschooling, etc.../ Power Point Presentation based on a similar story.

Nowadays students need to learn by doing, be able to show how creative they can be, and share their thoughts at the same time they are practicing the new language. But, in order to create an appropriate environment in class, teachers need to have the greatest quality and that is empathy, I mean create a bond with his students. Once students open up, they will show a better attitude towards learning.

The teacher must be strong enough and show a smile on his face all the time; positiveness and mental control is mandatory if you have groups that show attitudinal and behavioral problems. A teacher´s attitude is contagious, so it´s necessary to see the bright side, even in tough situations.

In order to have a motivational effect it is relevant to have the ability to keep your students focused and interested during classes. We inspire by using emotion, passion, visual contact, body language, students must know you are doing your job because you love what you do. Classes must be well prepared in advance and your talk must be convincing.

All this work is necessary because our students deserve respect, we should treat them as intelligent individuals. We have to make no difference in color, race, religion, etc... On the other hand, we have to understand their differences on learning styles, apply different strategies and let them be creative.

I realize that it´s easy to say but hard to be done: we need to overcome our thoughts. We tend to judge or put our thoughts first, we easily turn upset about some students attitudes, therefore it´s necessary to be mature enough and see what is behind that bad behavior to understand what the student is trying to say.

Our profession is really powerful, our words and example could mean helping those students realize their full potential and make a positive change, or stay the same way believing ours was just another boring class.

Your Learning Theory versus your Teaching Practice

The art of teaching involves having creativity and showing personal traits in the professional practice. Society has changed in many ways so teachers nowadays need to adapt their methodology to new challenges in their classes.

As an English as a Second Language Teacher in University level, I prefer to give opportunities to my students to let them show their true colors in the classroom. Each of them is a different world, therefore I consider that the Constructivism Approach, which is based on the fact that knowledge is not uniform and that it varies on each individual, is the most effective.

It is true that life experience teaches us in different ways, but it is also true that information is interpreted in abstract ways. I have learned that students can develop certain skills according to their interests, background and prior knowledge.

If a student is able to socialize and work with a classmate (or classmates) that has the same interests and similar positive behavior, his learning experience will be successful.

They can exchange information and create their own learning environment according to their needs. The teacher becomes a facilitator who provides the resources his students need and shows them a way to use them efficiently.

Peer interaction always sounds fun and can mean a great tool for enhancing certain procedures in class. The Constructivist view of activity involves physical performance, for example, research projects in groups, role plays, conversation practice and multimedia presentations.

When we apply the student-centred theory there are many interesting elements included: we focus on the student, his choices, his doing for learning, and also the shift on student – teacher relationship. It also allows personal learning rather than unhealthy competition.

On the other side, it is important to mention that sometimes it may be difficult to implement such approach, especially in South American culture. In some cases it is because teaching resources are not always available, in other cases it may be because of authorities disagreements with the teaching staff about certain policies, or may be because students do not have the same cultural beliefs or family values.

In my classes, I have always found students that prefer individual work. I have lived that experience as a teacher, but also as a student, so I understand how difficult it can be. As a student, I have always preferred to be an individual learner and do my own questioning and decisions.

Peer work has not been a good idea for my learning process because I realized the way some group members interact, most of the times, the most responsible student ends up doing all the work, nobody else produces anything at all, one or two members work and the rest do not have a clue of what is being done. Sometimes you are assigned to be in a group where you are not welcomed and your participation is ignored. It is disappointing trying to

work that way.

As a teacher, I apply the Constructivist approach methodology because my concern is focusing on students who LIKE and WANT to learn in groups, therefore whenever I ask them to start an activity that requires group work, I always identify those exceptions, that are students who do not like to be assigned to groups and prefer individual work. I show respect to their way of learning and motivate them to get excellent results in the way they are good at.

At the end, groups' grades always reflect the best students' effort but at the same time these students have taught the others some important skills for learning. On the other hand, it is really rewarding to see a student who has applied his own way of learning achieving excellent results at his own pace.

Through the years I have realized that Creative Teaching is an endless process of adaptation to social issues. There is no doubt that it would be perfect to have classes with students with similar personality characteristics and backgrounds so that the teacher could easily get everyone motivated and interested but as I say in class: "I'm not a magician, I am a Teacher and I just do my best".