

## Teaching Statement

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Benjamin Franklin said, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I forget to remember. Involve me and I learn.” In my experience as a teacher of French, nothing is more important to students’ success than their involvement in the learning process. My passion for French language, literature, and culture is not enough to inspire students to learn. If I tell a student what to say, he or she repeats without internalizing the words. Nation (2001) posits that students learn best when they receive a high volume of structured input. Bill VanPatten also writes that providing input and creating tasks which require students to understand meaning and form together through processing instruction will enable students to arrive at grammar rules on their own. I believe that any instructor should do more than present material to students but should provide students with many opportunities to take ownership of their education.

As a young student of French, I often struggled with anxiety in the classroom, not realizing that I had an over-active monitor inhibiting me from speaking in class. Many students do not fully apply their linguistic capabilities in their native language to their second language because they do not instinctively make those connections. In keeping with Krashen’s concepts of affective filter and monitor, I believe that a teacher should work with students who either have a low tolerance for ambiguity or who have high affective filters. My second teaching goal is to facilitate meta-cognition even while encouraging students to explore their interests. Students often require extra motivation to thrive in a foreign language classroom, because their reasons for enrolling in the course usually include the university’s requirement of a second language before graduation. When I encourage self-expression, anxiety becomes less of an issue, and students discover for themselves what motivates them to continue to improve, beyond that desire for an A in the class. For example, a student who studies political science should have the chance to read an article or watch a news segment about French politics. In doing so, the student enhances his or her vocabulary and grammar and learns that French does not just exist in the classroom. He or she also engages with the class beyond what it contributes to a list of required courses for graduation.

The third goal of excellent teaching is to cultivate intercultural communicative competence. I have learned that the less I involve my students in the classroom, whether through group presentations or conversation with peers, the less likely my students are to make connections between French class and their own culture. Many students also bring misconceptions about foreign cultures into their French course. The initial step toward challenging these notions is to learn about students’ backgrounds, as Glynn, Wesley, and Wassell have suggested in their book *Words and Actions: Teaching Languages through the Lens of Social Justice*. While I am learning more about French every day, I find that the most rewarding part about teaching is how much students teach me in return. Individual awareness incorporates students’ diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences into the classroom. If I am an effective teacher, students bring questions to ask about themselves and more connections to make between their culture and that of the global French community. My role is to both motivate and to facilitate this intercultural communication. The path to mutual success lies in this exchange of ideas. As Benjamin Franklin reminds us, we learn when we are involved in a community.

## Reference List

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