

Over the course of my studies in French, I have encountered several types of instructors, each of whom had their own unique style of teaching. Some of their methods were more effective than others, but the one trait that my favorite instructors all possessed was a delicate balance between having high expectations, yet an approachable demeanor. These were the instructors who set clear course requirements from day one. These were the instructors who truly cared about their students' success. These were the instructors I did not want to disappoint. Now, as I begin conducting my own French classroom, my goal as a teacher is to create a learning environment that is engaging and meaningful so that my students learn in an entertaining, yet useful and contextualized manner. By establishing clear expectations while still maintaining an inviting learning atmosphere, I strive to have students who become lifelong learners of French in that they appreciate the language and culture long after they have completed my course.

After having taught and tutored students of all ages at various levels of French, it has become clear to me that different learners require different methods of instruction. My definition of a successful instructor is one that focuses on communicative activities and appropriately implements authentic texts in order to provide meaningful learning experiences. While learning how to read and write in a foreign language is highly important, I believe the ability to understand and communicate orally in a foreign language to be the most vital skill acquired in the L2 classroom. It has been my personal experience both as a student and an instructor that language is learned best when it is utilized. Through the communicative approach, my students become active users of French, producing the language more and more each day. In order to decrease inevitable performance anxiety, I have my students create partnerships and thus a sense of comradery from day one. These partnerships enable my students to use one another as resources, check for understanding in an informal manner, and actively use the French language

with a speaker of equal or similar fluency level. My classroom's activities revolve around my students' interpersonal interactions, especially with the *think, pair, share* method. I have found that allowing my students to consult one another as resources not only increases their confidence, but also decreases their fear of being judged. In order to support this emphasis on L2 interpersonal communication, my classroom also utilizes authentic French texts such as songs, websites, and videos. These materials not only allow for more meaningful, contextualized learning, they also help incorporate modern modes of communication identical to what my students use in their native language. Attention-grabbing material presented in familiar forms prompts the students to use their existing schema to derive meaning from the text, thus expanding the knowledge they already possess.

Much like there are different types of learners, there are also different types of performers. Therefore, I firmly believe in the importance of varied types of assessment. A successful form of assessment allows the students to convey what they know as opposed to testing what they do or do not know. Not only should assessment be varied in how it's presented – writing, speaking, listening – it should also be varied in how it's conducted – individual, pairs, groups. As the structure of my classroom is communicative in nature, this allows for informal assessments of speaking and listening to occur on a daily basis. Informal assessments of writing are also easily incorporated in my lessons with short sentence structure activities. Informal assessments are a key element in checking for understanding as they allow students to produce language in a low-stress format.

Teaching is important to me not only because it allows me to share my knowledge and love of the French language, but also because it enables me to continue learning every day. Participation in professional development is essential in maintaining an engaging classroom –

integration of new technology and platforms keeps the classroom fun and entertaining. The element of collaboration is also one of the benefits I enjoy as a foreign language instructor as it enables me to learn and improve my methods not only from my personal experiences, but also from the experiences of others.

Once one has been both a student and an instructor, it becomes clear that classroom success does not rely on the student or the instructor alone, but is instead a joint effort based on a delicate balance between rigid structure and individual freedom. I believe that the instructor should provide a classroom that has understandable expectations in order to provide students with an environment that they can rely on. The instructor should also be continually searching for new ways to explore and explain their content area so that students remain engaged and excited about learning. As instructors, we reap what we sow, and if we ourselves do not put forth any effort or creativity into our work, how can we expect our students to do so?