

## **Philosophy of Teaching**

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### **What are my beliefs about teaching and learning?**

*Carpe Diem (Seize the Day)*

When I teach I hope to be able to share my knowledge with my students, to help them grow and improve not only in the content area but as individuals. I hope to share with them the belief that they each have individual talents and potential to succeed as human beings who can bring positive change to their communities. I ask that they make full use of the opportunities that come their way and to live life to the fullest each day. I convey to them that they always have choices and that an integral part of a university education is not just to learn to become an engineer, or lawyer, a doctor, etc but more so to be informed about the world and their role and contributions as members of the human race.

Learning has to be meaningful for it to have impact which is the reason many of the lessons are based on the principles of task-based learning. I try to create an environment of mutual trust and respect in my classrooms; students seem to respond more positively when I take the time to listen and pay attention to their needs. Therefore, I try as much as possible to communicate effectively with my students while at the same time establishing clear goals and expectations for the course and the amount of work required to succeed in that course. As a teacher of mostly English language proficiency courses, I tell my students that learning a language is akin to learning to ride a bicycle or learning to drive or learning to cook; all require learning a skill and as with most skills practice makes perfect. Students need to see and understand that in order to be better at language they have to use it as much as possible both inside and outside the classroom which means they have to be active participants while I provide the supportive environment.

There never seems to be enough hours in a day to share with my students all that I wish I could; there is always the continual exploration of pedagogical strategies, approaches, and applications / resources to use in my classroom to help my students engage and connect in the lessons and discussions held in class. Students are continually asked to think and share their opinions of an issue which often starts off as a conversation between us and winds up as classroom discussion where questions are asked but answers are initially not forthcoming. However, given time and encouragement students struggle through and find their voice and confidence to share their viewpoints.

For me as a teacher it has never been good enough.. there's always room for improvement. The payoff is when students light up in class and respond in a discussion. Everyday is an opportunity to do better, both for me and for my

students. I want them to reach for the stars, to go beyond their perceived boundaries and for that to happen, I, as the teacher needs to do the same.

In the words of Haim Ginott:

“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a student’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is MY response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or deescalated and a student humanized or dehumanized.”

## **Area of Specialization**

Aside from spending most of my time teaching the English Language, I have also spent time serving as test vetter for the English Placement Test (EPT) and I also have been involved with internal reviews of test specifications and blueprints for the EPT. Recently, I have also been working on developing teaching materials for task-based learning and teaching for the English Language Department.

## **Innovation in Teaching & Learning**

The innovation I would like to elaborate on for this teaching portfolio belongs to CELPAD, I merely am part of the teaching team and academic administrator responsible for managing and coordinating it. The innovation is related to the task-based learning and teaching approach (TBLT) for language learning. The basis of a task-based approach is that the most effective way to teach a language is to engage learners in real language use in the classroom (Willis & Willis, 2007).

This is achieved by designing tasks for students such as discussions, problems, games which students participate in using the target language.

The shift towards using the TBLT approach was based on the fact that while students may be able to complete isolated grammar exercises correctly, they were unable to write and speak fluently and /or accurately.

As such, the CELPAD decided to adopt and adapt the TBLT approach into the curriculum. As there are very few (if any) wholly standalone textbooks for TBLT use, the English Language Department at CELPAD decided to embark on a material writing 'mission' for use in classroom instruction for the English proficiency courses from Level 1 till Level 6. The traditional approach of learning language in a presentation, production, and practice method shifts to one where students are doing tasks that engage them and this allows for more learner-centred activities. The activities are designed to promote interest and communication. In addition, the tasks should relate to real-world activities on three levels; meaning, discourse and activity.

As the academic administrator tasked with the responsibility of managing the use of TBLT for the English Language Department, I have had to coordinate, plan, manage and design the lesson plans and modules for the curriculum. It has been both challenging and rewarding for our team at ELD, CELPAD.

## **Contributions in Teaching & Learning Practices that have left significant impact on my students**

I have been a teacher at IIUM since 1990 and I hope that I have had some impact on my students. Some of my students have since become my colleagues and are presently teaching at CELPAD. Some of my students have become professionals such as lawyers and doctors, and it is indeed gratifying that some still remain in touch and remember me as their teacher.

Most recently, I was touched when my ex-students asked if they could share my story of how I reverted to Islam in their RKA (Islam and other Religions) class. The presentation topic was on Syahadah and its effects.

In the previous semester, I had an opportunity to share with them my story of how I had come to accept Islam as my way of life and faith. We talked about the challenges of growing up in this age and of the choices we make in life.

I am deeply touched that they remembered the discussion from class and that they decided to present on what Syahadah meant for me and the effects it had for me; more importantly it helped them think of what it means to them as people who are born as muslims.

The story also serves as an example of how I try to integrate Islamization of knowledge in my discussions and lessons. There are numerous opportunities to discuss aspects of Islam and the way of life in reading materials and texts as well as topics in group speaking discussions.

### **List of Courses taught at IIUM**

1. Introduction to Short Stories
2. Introduction to Poetry
3. English for Academic Writing
4. English Language Level 1 & 2
5. English Language Level 3
6. English Language Level 4
7. English Language Level 5
8. English Language Level 6