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Approaches
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My Teaching Experience



Tutor: Photography, Keene, NH: My linked blog best explains my approach to teaching photography: francemenkphotoworkshops.com

Tutor: ECL (English as a creative language. Yes, another acronym!), Walpole NH: Help teenagers with creative writing and general use of English, especially for their college application essays (most recent student is now attending Bard). I make no promises! My approach is to use the student's primary interests as the vehicle for their development; e.g., one was a composer, so I was able to have him think about the frame of mind he had when he wrote music and to apply that to his writing.

Instructor: Rock Climbing: Keene Family YMCA NH: Children, but I lure their parents to the wall and watch their children cheer them on. (Esteem building and terrific bonding for the entire family)

Faculty: Illustration, Parsons School of Design, NYC: Designed course syllabus and exhibited personal work. At the time, I was a full-time, freelance illustrator.

Faculty: Drawing, Painting & Illustration, Silvermine College of Art, CT: Developed instructional approaches and syllabus for teaching techniques in several media, as well as approaches to the varying goals of each student.

Instructor in ESL and EFL (to continue our tradition of affection for acronyms: EFL as a first language!) Melbourne, AUS: Worked with students of all ages and abilities from international business people who wanted to speak more colloquially, to native English-speaking students needing remedial work. I was able to use the identifiable sounds of English, as well as its structure, to make the language "come alive" for them. I believe in exposing learners to the beauty of the language at the very beginning, even though they might not understand the words. ("Increase the scaffolding, not the content...")

Instructor for Outward Bound, Voyageur Outward Bound school, MN: Outward Bound is an international organization based on the knowledge that people can achieve far more than they imagine they can. We provide encouragement and an enabling environment for students of all ages, from 14 upward, to find confidence and trust in both themselves and others. I trained them in outdoor skills sufficient to equip them for independent wilderness travel. This was always "total immersion." They learned these skills on the outward expedition, and were then expected to return to home base on their own. I often employed techniques which provoked the emotional state they might find themselves, should they be without an instructor's support. E.g., I made sure it was almost impossible to find me during their "search and rescue" lesson.

Wilderness skills taught: Expedition travel in summer & winter; team communication and reliance; map reading; search & rescue; advanced first aid; white water canoeing; rock climbing; swimming techniques for surviving in cold water; cross-country skiing and ice travel; fire building & cooking (esp in the rain)

Faculty: Visual Arts & Language Arts, Woodstock Country School, VT: a coed, prep school. It was the first in the USA (as far as I know) to offer a 12 month schedule. Students could take any 3 months as either a vacation or to pursue a personal project, for which they received credit. It is now defunct. I taught art in many media, creative writing & “managed” the girls’ dorm. There were no constrictions on the students’ pursuits; e.g., one of my students built a harpsichord as his art project. Art is always an individual pursuit. (Some students' names: Franzen, Seeger, etc.)

Tutor: Piano, Detroit MI: At the age of 12 - 13, always wanting to be independent, I convinced some friends’ parents to pay me to teach their children piano. That lasted for about a year. After becoming disgusted with their lack of practicing, and with my childish disinterest in learning how to encourage them, I told them to go home.

SUMMARY

What defines me, how I love to enable others to exceed their expectations, my difficulties, my reflections, my desires for my own teaching:

Through my initial exposure to Latin in grade school, I came to understand the beauty of language in an academic way, and to see how it could be used as a creative tool. I had been exposed to an extensive library at home, and had always loved reading. From that point onward, I played with English, often making up my own words. Through my study of French and Spanish, and then through engaging with people in other cultures, I developed an even greater feel for the power of language.

My approach is to use poetry, film, and song at the very beginning. The envelopment in the beauty and flexibility of English has encouraged my students to want to learn. I ask them to write as soon as they can form a sentence, and make my sessions as humorous as I can. My objective is to push aside the impedence students bring to learning. I use an inductive method naturally and increase scaffolding as needed, as long as possible, resisting the urge to be deductive. Finding that

point at which the student could balk because of too much input without enough affordance is my goal. I have always had few enough students to be able to discern this reasonably well.

What I want from SIT is technique and knowledge far beyond my current approach. I need to know how to consciously capture the full attention of a class; especially one with L1's of different languages and cultures.

I want to be able to imbue the full "power" of language into my students.