
Statement of Teaching Philosophy

- Sarita Mehta, Ph.D

We must give more attention to the interplay between the science of teaching – pedagogy – and the art of teaching... A teacher must be anchored in pedagogy and blend imagination, creativity and inspiration into the teaching learning process to ignite a passion for learning in student". - Peyton Williams

I am fortunate; my parents gave me very meaningful name, *Sarita*. The Hindi meaning of *Sarita* is ‘River’. It reminds me of the Holy Ganga, the lifeline of the Indian society and culture, which is full of vigor and vitality, and ever flowing, I feel so am I. When I opened my eyes in this world, my grandmother is said to have written the word ‘Om’ on my tongue. Thus, all the cultural values and noble traditions that I received in biological, social and national heritage compromise my invaluable treasure. Moreover, as a teacher, academician, writer, a poet, and artist, I am ever eager to pass it on to the new generation. Again, I am very fortunate to have found ample opportunities in my youthful career to travel all through my home country India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari as well as to many foreign countries, to my great enlightenment and emotional satisfaction. In 1999, I went as a delegate to UK on a research project ‘Comparative study of Educational Systems of different Countries’. In the same year, I came here in USA, and I brought with me more than two decades of teaching experience, including my career service of a Lecturer in famous Dev Samaj College of Education, Chandigarh, India.

My philosophy of teaching Hindi Language and Culture comes from my own personal experience as a student, tutor and teacher. Interestingly, while in USA, my first two students, whom I had the pleasure to impart elementary lesson in Hindi, happened to be Americans, who were going to visit India on a business tour. It was a great challenge for me, as I never had the chance to teach Hindi to the Non –Natives. I had experience to teach the native students only. I recollected my experience as a learner, when I did my Russian Language course more than two decade ago. I took the courage, and tailored the course according to their requirements, developed creative teaching material, and used few innovative methods of teachings. I found very encouraging response and amazing results from the learners. Thereafter, I began to conduct regular classes in the form of Sunday school. The colorful and pictorial Book of mine, entitled “Aao Hindi Sikhen’ is the out come of the teaching material prepared, and the methodology adopted by me for my teaching. It makes the learning of Hindi a very simple and interesting affair. I always focus on the needs and requirements of the students, and try to adopt the best possible methods to give the maximum learning.

I love only two things in my life, learning and teaching. I can not think my life without books. I have a deep passion for teaching, and this is the profession, which give me immense pleasure and greatest satisfaction. My passion for teaching is inherited from my father, a dedicated teacher and Historian. Further it is influenced by many effective teachers who have impacted my life. I am committed to and very serious about my role as a teacher. To say ‘My goal is to be the best teacher I can’.

Now, after having experience as a student of language Teacher Training Program, and few other teaching related programs, and also with my more than a decade of teaching experience in various institutions in New York and Houston as a foreign language teacher, I have developed my own philosophy of teaching language to Heritage and Non-Heritage students. My teaching Philosophy is as under:

I believe in Student - Centered approach with the consideration of individual needs. Students come to class, and bring with them different learning backgrounds and various motivations. As Hadley (2001) points out “motivation and attitudes are important factors for adults learning a foreign language”. (p61). They can influence the language

acquisition dramatically. By knowing both motivation and background of our learners, we are able to tie and tune interest, create the form and content of instructions.

I place the students in the center of the learning process. I try to make my lesson efficiently keeping it in mind, and tailored my own lessons accordingly. I firmly believe about five components that must be taught in an effective reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

I have developed 'FUN' Method of teaching foreign language. FUN Method is based on Howard Gardner's 'Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory. Gardner identifies nine basic intelligences: Verbal Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Visual/Spatial, Body/ Kinesthetic, Musical /Rhythmic Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. I have defined FUN as:

F: Accordingly, the role of a teacher is **to Facilitate** learning, to help to develop **Fascination** for learning, to help them learning correct **Formation** and pronunciation of words, and **Fulfill** their desire to learn a new language.

U: Our **Ultimate Goal** is language fluency, acquisition of new language to achieve the final goals. Every learner is **unique**, and it is the responsibility of a teacher **to understand** individual differences, and **understand** learner's intelligences to **utilize** his/her creativity to learn the language with perfection.

N: Every language is learnable and can be learnt in a **Natural** manner in the same way as we learn our **Native** language. Thus teacher **needs** to design teaching activities to meet the individual **Needs** and use some **Novel** methods of teaching/learning.

My teaching philosophy relies on the observation that the lecture should be designed to motivate the students towards learning. I always pre-conceived the Instructional objectives and learning outcomes, and keep in mind the immediate needs of my students. I believe that well-planned course projects are very important to help students fully understand the topic, polish the skills and prepare for their career. I always try to create positive student-teacher relationship. I prepare class activities which challenge them provide instructions that develop higher-order thinking skills. I am very clear about what I am trying to teach and then master instructional strategies to help students accomplish their learning goals. I am very clear before going to the class about, how, when, what and why about my teaching- learning process.

I try to make my Lesson efficiently, and balance the lesson by using technology and media support. Another very important supplement thing in my lessons is the culture by providing authentic language context, and real-life situations. Recently, this semester, we introduce Photo Story, my students are very excited to learn, I always want students to succeed, advocate take, take the lead help the students open up, help them create, use variety of teaching styles. I am glad that they are able to give very good results.

A glimpse of my innovative method of teaching Hindi can be found in my paper '**Relax and Learn Hindi: Laugh away Stress**', Paper presented at The Foreign Language Program Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and the Defense Language Institute (DLI) Monterey, which was highly appreciated. I have developed a very creative curriculum 'Teaching Hindi through Cultural Activities', (Unpublished), which I successfully used at Penn Startalk Program in 2009. Again, I developed project, 'Teaching Hindi through Indian Festivals' to teach my students at ABC Language Institute. The students enjoyed the program; all these programs are developed for college students, beginners to advance level.

I am fully aware to the assessment part also. I have developed my own assignment exercises. Adding variety to the teaching material, I used variety of assignments to evaluate the course. They are also in the fun way beside daily class recapitulation, i.e. organize the function, deliver the speech, write Email to their friends and teacher in target language, prepare greeting cards, role play/Skits, Powerpoint presentations.

Moreover, I am always ready to develop professional competences that provide opportunity for personal growth and development as clearly mentioned in my educational qualifications. Still there is a lot of scope for new innovations, creations and learning.
