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Authenticity Beyond Teaching Materials: The Impact of Teacher's Authentic Care on Student's Beliefs in the First-Year Foreign Language Classes

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Authenticity beyond teaching materials: the impact of teacher’s authentic care on student’s beliefs in the first-year foreign language classes.

The one-semester foreign language requirement in some US colleges could be detrimental to student retention due to their psychological disposition and causal interpretation of the outcomes of the learning process. Students who do not show rapid progress during their first semester of foreign language classes often believe that they do not have a natural ability to learn a foreign language. Such beliefs could decrease students’ motivation to continue their foreign language studies. Research shows that personal beliefs about intelligence and knowledge are not strongly related to abilities, but affect the way people reason (Bruning, Schraw & Norby, 2011). In foreign language instruction, student’s personal beliefs have a large effect on willingness to communicate in target language and persistence to continue their studies. Thus, the role of students’ beliefs is important for understanding language learners’ motivation and persistence.

Teachers’ attitudes towards students’ learning also play an important role in the understanding of student’s beliefs in the foreign language classroom. Noddings (2013) suggests that first, and foremost, teachers should care for students and only then, be enactors of specialized functions. Thus, foreign language classrooms should not be considered as places where teachers only train the skills, but also the places where they nurture and maintain care through attitudes, emotions and intellectual activity. The purpose of this study is to explore how teacher’s attitudes of authentic care may impact student’s beliefs on learning a foreign language in the first-year foreign language classes.

Given the claimed high dropout rate of students from language classes after they complete their foreign language requirement, and the acknowledgment of the fact that many students do not opt to continue their studies in foreign languages, knowledge, and understanding of factors that contribute to students’ beliefs on language learning may impact the strategies and instruction of foreign language in the US higher education. First, the examination of teacher’s authentic care can add to the professional development of foreign language teachers, and second, it can provide effective classroom strategies and recommendations that can potentially increase the number of US students studying foreign languages.

References:
