

## Teaching Statement

*Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything one learned in school*  
Albert Einstein

*Teaching is the highest form of understanding*  
Aristotle

My teaching philosophy lies at the center of two principles indicated by the quotes from Einstein and Aristotle. The first one is about the value of education and how teachers should train their students. I believe that the purpose of education is not only to expose students to various perspectives that enhance their knowledge on certain areas, but also to allow them to explore, think critically, and reflect on what they learn in a class setting. These provide opportunities to see the big picture in issues and topics as well as to apply the theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Additionally, they are able to transfer their knowledge to different domains. Thus, the important thing in education is to teach “general skills” that will aid students in multiple settings within and outside classrooms.

In a strong relationship with the first principle, the second one involves analyses of one’s own teaching capabilities, content knowledge, and understanding over and beyond the teaching materials. The idea is kind of introspection in order to improve teaching skills for being a good instructor. I believe that a teacher learns through teaching and gains more when criticize herself. To me, teaching is a constantly evolving process and high-level awareness rather than a habit or determined skill. Hence, I take teaching seriously rather than for granted.

I highly employ my cultural synthesis and vision to my teaching that come from my upbringing in Istanbul/Turkey as situated at the intersection of Eastern and Western beliefs. The combination of these different perspectives in teaching feed my teaching skills. It also helps me to deeply think and increase my awareness and sensitivity to diversity, cultural beliefs and practices.

My teaching goals and experiences reflect my teaching philosophy. First and foremost, I strongly believe in equality in classroom, active participation of students, collaborative learning, and learning outside the classroom. A synthesis of these various activities result in better understanding and learning the material. In order to achieve these goals, I use multiple methods such as reflection papers, creation of discussion questions, and observations outside classroom. In a recent written evaluation of the Developmental Psychology course I taught, students expressed their positive thoughts saying

*“She was understanding, approachable, and gave a positive atmosphere in class. She really cared about her students and very well educated in the course material. She gave prompt feedbacks and had various question types in the exams. She prepared students to upper level classes.”*

Thus, students seem to realize my motivation in teaching psychology: to provide theoretical understanding with its applications and going beyond the commonsense psychological knowledge to real facts in a friendly, dynamic, and equal environment.

Second, my passion and enthusiasm about teaching necessitate self-reflection and self-improvement. I attended to workshops and presentations on teaching offered to graduate students at Temple University. One of these workshops was about the challenges of being an international instructor and how to cope with diversity in classroom settings. In addition to these activities, during my graduate training, I took a course on “Teaching Psychology,” which tremendously helped me to put different pieces together such as preparation for class, syllabus making, and interaction with students.

My teaching experiences include teaching assistantships to large classes, directing the discussion sessions in small classes, and teaching introductory (e.g., Developmental Psychology) as well as upper division courses (e.g., Topics in Psychology: Language Development). These experiences along with several guest lectures on my expertise area – Early Cognitive and Language Development – afford me the opportunity to teach in a variety of settings, transfer my knowledge to students with different backgrounds, and enhance my teaching skills. My diligence in teaching was awarded by Temple University College of Liberal Arts with a “Certificate of Merit in Teaching.”

Another part of my teaching experience involves mentoring undergraduate students, honors students, summer interns, and high school students in research laboratories. I work closely with students on different levels of research - implementing research design, creating stimuli, recruiting participants, coding, and analyzing data. In an international conference on child development (Society for Research in Child Development), two of the summer interns and a volunteer I mentored are co-authors on my presentations. I also mentor an honors student on her project about language acquisition. We plan to submit two papers to upcoming conferences. Together with one of my laboratory fellows, we design a small language discussion group where undergraduate research assistants read articles in detail and discuss their ideas, reactions to the study. I believe that mentoring in a research laboratory improves both teaching and researcher qualifications. I excel my skills about describing theoretical underpinnings of research at various levels, presenting challenging material in an accessible way by putting it to a big picture, and considering the students’ perspectives on research.

Finally, as a teacher, I use my ultimate energy to inspire my students to be open to various standpoints, diversity, and cultural beliefs, and to promote them to be open-minded, creative, and analytical individuals. My perseverance, ambition, and dedication in teaching encourage me to consider teaching as an enduring process that must be developed throughout in a teacher’s life.