

Teaching-Observation Reflection: February 12, 2015

Today was probably my favorite lesson I've taught so far. Prior to starting the class, I wasn't feel well and was experiencing some symptoms that made me feel less confident in my ability to lead the class successfully. At the beginning of class, I felt a little shaky, which made me feel less certain about what I was doing. I began with a review of some academic vocabulary and tried to re-explain the meaning and use of *procrastinate*. I could have used a better sentence than the one I chose at first. What I should have done was write down a good one before class and then used that sentence, rather than fishing for one on the spot and coming up with something that isn't very clear. As I reviewed the words with them one-by-one, I started to feel better and like I knew what I was doing.

I believe connecting materials to activities, and vice-versa, are very important. In my opinion, isolated learning activities that are not in line with any current projects, assignments, or discussions are not as effective as those that make connections with what the students have already been talking about or working on. I had a lesson plan made before this class, but since Beth had changed their presentation project, I wanted to make sure my lesson was connected to their new project. Previously, I had created this lesson under the topic of exercise. The objectives for this lesson were for students to: express their opinions and support them with academic language; express agreement and disagreement with academic language; and present information to the class. I was going to start out with asking them some questions about exercise and happiness, which would then follow into distinguishing between facts and opinions about running, cycling, and swimming. Students would be split into groups to gather facts and opinions about their form of exercise and would then use academic phrasing for having a discussion (Unit 6, pg. 105 in the textbook). I chose this because Beth was going to

introduce a project where students would pick a fun activity they like to do and persuade their classmates to do that activity. However, that morning, Beth decided to let the students pick their own topics for the presentation under the topic of “what do international students care about?” This led to brainstorming and discussions about college life, culture, housing situations in America, discrimination and racism, etc. The week before, we had talked about sleep and how it affects studying. I thought this would be a great time to introduce the topic again. Since we hadn’t gotten to the fact/opinion portion of the lesson the day before, I found this to be an opportune moment to introduce that as well. The activity we ended up doing was along the same lines as the one I had created before, but the topic was sleep and studying, or memory, and students were put into two groups. The lesson was supposed to focus on academic speaking skills, so having the students in two groups would be more beneficial because they would have a chance to respond to each other.

In order to get to the activity, I ended the warmer vocabulary with the word *credibility*. After students told me the definition, I asked them to tell me when credibility is necessary. I brought this up because Beth was also talking with the students about researching for their presentation and evaluating resources. This discussion then led to the need for *facts* to support credibility, which then led to differentiating between facts and opinions. I then introduced the sleep and studying topic and asked student what their opinions are about the matter. Their opinions led to a discussion, and the discussion led to reviewing academic phrasing for academic discussions. It was here that I introduced the fact and opinion activity.

I was impressed with the prior knowledge the students had about academic phrasing when agreeing and disagreeing with people. Because the class is made up of mostly Saudi students, it is often loud and rambunctious. Students constantly talk over each other and

tempers can sometimes be tested with a few students. They get very excited and really enjoy having discussions; however, in an academic setting, it is important for them to allow others to finish speaking before they respond to comments. The fact that they knew so many phrases was surprising and entertaining to me because they never use them in class! While practicing the phrases on pg. 105 in their textbook, I heard students actually using them and they were talking with each other. One thing I like about this group of students is their engagement. It's not hard to get them talking; the hard part is getting them to stop, which is a great problem! Next, the students needed to write down their opinions about sleep and studying and find two or more additional facts about the subject. It wasn't until after they started that I thought to model what I wanted them to do on their posters. I almost always forget to model! I love examples, so it's ridiculous that I of all people forget to provide them. Granted, I did model for them, but I need to remember to do it sooner.

The discussion at the end didn't go exactly as I had hoped or planned that it would. The students usually read everything right off their poster. I'm trying to get them to gain confidence in themselves and be able to remember the information they read or listened to, rather than relying on the poster so much. Some of them just read everything straight from the poster or their phones. They got some of the academic language in, but it wasn't as much as I was hoping for. There were also some students who did most of the talking and I had to ask students questions individually to get them to participate. Overall, I think it was successful, but I wish we had more time for them to have a more structured discussion.

Teaching is so invigorating for me. I always seem to have more energy or be in a better mood after I teach. After the class was over, many of the students came up to me and told me they really enjoyed the class. One student not only liked my teaching, but noticed that my

teaching was the same with and without James being in the classroom. I really appreciated his comment and I found it insightful of him to notice that. Class went so well that I'm regretting not videotaping this session! I am truly enjoying my time with Beth and these students. What I like most about this environment and setting is that my classroom management skills are challenged. I'm forced to find different ways of managing discussions, student interaction and maintaining focus. This is by no means an unruly group of students, but I'm using strategies I haven't necessarily had to use when working with ELC students. Despite the challenges, these students almost make teaching feel easy.