Classroom Observation Essay Responses

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UCLA TESOL: Introduction to Linguistics

February 24th, 2024

***Learning Strategies***

1. **What did you learn about teaching from this observation? Include at least one in–text citation from the current class readings to support your response.** Is there something that was particularly useful in this lesson? Was there clear evidence of a high-quality lesson? Were the learning goals and objectives clearly reviewed and evident? Please give examples and specific details (150-300 words)

I learned a few things from observing the 6th-grade ESL class. First, the warm-up does not have to be lesson related. The teacher asked a simple question: which superpower would the students choose, super speed or super strength? The students found this warm-up discussion interesting. The teacher later mentioned that she usually asks random fun questions, like if they prefer to live in a tree house or a tent. Second, teaching morphology is unquestionably useful. I was impressed by how the students applied their knowledge of Greek and Latin roots and prefixes and arrived at what the new words meant and how they were pronounced independently. Kirby and Bowers describe morphology as “fundamentally related to semantics… it also provides important clues about how words should be written and pronounced… Morphology provides the key to developing both word knowledge and high quality mental representations and the knowledge of morphology contributes to success in reading in children from Grades 1 to 6” (2012).

Two lesson goals were evident; the first was about the purpose of morphology in learning new words, while the second was the practice activities to get more exposure to word roots and prefixes. There was clear evidence of a high-quality lesson in some respects, such as direct instruction and scaffolding of ideas. The four activities in the worksheet were motivating and fun. The teacher elicited answers before and after the activities. There was no technology or other modalities used. This lesson is a continuation of previous lessons. Other materials might have been previously introduced.

1. **What have you learned from this observation that relates to your current TESOL class?** Discuss two strategies from your current course work and readings that were evident in this lesson. Was there a section where learner engagement and student understanding could be improved? (150-300 words)

The teacher used several strategies to ensure that her students were engaged and understood what was required of them. First, she started with a short recap of the word roots from the textbook. She gave familiar examples different from the ones in the book and asked the students to think of other examples. She then gave handouts of tables of Greek and Latin roots and prefixes to scaffold the lesson. Then, the second handout provided clear directions about each exercise.

The class was divided into pair work. It seemed that this was not the first time for the students to work on these types of activities. The student who struggled the most and did not have a partner worked with the teacher. All the students understood the activities and mostly answered correctly, even when the words were new. The teacher often repeated some instructions to make sure that everyone understood. She also repeatedly instructed them to check their spelling and punctuation.

While reviewing the answers, the teacher made the students read aloud their writing. This is an excellent way to make students learn about syntax and help them decide if it sounds correct. The teacher provided some comments and examples about how some new words are connected to real-life words or an animation they watch. From my observation, I noticed that the teachers used modeling, clarifying, repetition, clear directions, scaffolding, and real-life connections as strategies in teaching this lesson.

***Connecting to TESOL Classwork***

1. **Discuss in detail the classroom management of this particular lesson.** (100-200 words)

Nine ESL students sat at a round table surrounding the teacher. This encouraged collaboration and on-task participation. The teacher could see what the students were answering and made corrections when necessary. When it was time to work in pairs, the rest of the class space was used. The class had an established routine; each pair sat separated to work without disrupting each other. The class worked silently; only the murmurs of answers and lesson-related conversations were heard. It was a low-stress environment, and everyone looked comfortable. The teacher frequently reminded them to use proper punctuation and spelling while working. Once the students finished, they gathered around the table again to review and discuss their answers. The teacher gave effective feedback and used positive reinforcement as she corrected their answers.

1. **Were there informal assessments during this lesson that proved understanding and clarity on the part of the student? Describe these assessments in detail. Were they stressful? What additional assessments could you add if you were the teacher? (100-200 words)**

The teacher reviewed the lesson and explained the exercises. Afterward, she gave a quick informal assessment to check the students’ understanding of the required tasks. To double-check that everything was clear, she asked what “fore” meant and if the students knew words that started with “fore.” The environment was stress-free, and the students looked confident and eager to start. When the students were ready to answer the exercises, the teacher monitored them and was ready to answer any of their questions. One of the students did not have a partner, so she worked with him, assessing his knowledge and making sure that he could answer the questions by himself. The students did not have identical exercises. I would not have added any additional assessments, for each handout had at least 3 or 4 different types of exercises.

1. **Is there something from this observation that really stands out?** Give two or more examples and justify your reasoning. (100-250 words)

The choice of the lesson stood out for me. I have never seen Greek and Latin roots taught in an ESL class. Morphology helps with vocabulary development and reading progress. According to research, it is important to increase “word knowledge in language and literacy development.” The students learn “all aspects of word knowledge (word meanings, syntactic roles, how the word sounds, and how the word is written)” (Kirby & Bower, 2012). In addition, the students' level is intermediate to upper-intermediate, so it was not hard to teach morphology.

Another thing that stood out for me was the selection of the activities. They involved drawing, searching for words, guessing their meaning, and writing short sentences containing the root words. The students were fully engaged with the activities, creating a stress-free environment and making class management easier.

***Current Classwork- Morphology, Phonology, Grammar***

1. **What approach to teaching grammar did the instructor take? Was it taught explicitly or implicitly? If the lesson was not focused on grammar or pronunciation, how did the instructor incorporate them in this lesson? Was it effective? Draw upon class materials and readings. What would you do differently?** (100- 250 words)

The teacher taught morphology explicitly. She followed the traditional approach in teaching grammar using direct instruction, followed by drills to practice recognizing the meaning of word roots and prefixes. She quickly reviewed some prefixes from the previous lesson. The students then answered exercises to identify the meaning of familiar roots and write them in sentences. The traditional approach to grammar teaching focuses on sentence and word levels. The word level grammar refers to the structure and formation of words in a language, such as morphology and syntax.

The traditional approach has been criticized for focusing on memorizing the rules but not enough on meaningful communication. The 6th-grade students can initially benefit from the traditional approach, as they need to acquire morphological knowledge. As these high-level proficiency students progress, the exercises will become somewhat limiting. The American English website states, “Higher level students can often benefit from using authentic texts… Teaching grammar in context means that providing a context is a part of the lesson, but it doesn’t mean that it is the whole lesson” (*Teacher's Corner: Teaching grammar for communicative competence ...*). The next crucial step is teaching grammar in context, also known as the communicative approach. What I would do differently is to add authentic text incorporating real-world examples of words and their morphological components in reading passages or texts. It would help the students see how morphology works in context.

References

Kirby, J. R., & Bowers, P. F. (2012, June). *Morphology works - foundation for learning and literacy*. Foundation for Learning and Literacy. https://foundationforlearningandliteracy.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Morphology-works.pdf

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