

Reporting on Training

1. Introduction

I participated in the Hiroshima Board of Education Teacher Training Program at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC) in Hawaii from 23rd July to 12th August. I had three objectives when I joined this program;

- (1) To improve my English proficiency so that it will become easier for me to conduct English classes in English.
- (2) To learn about Content-based Instruction and find some ways to apply it to my classes so that students can improve their communicative ability in English.
- (3) To learn about Hawaiian culture so that I can tell my students about it before they go to Hawaii on their school trip next year.

Before leaving Japan, I was anxious about my succeeding in this program because I hadn't had enough time to prepare for it, and I had heard from the previous participants that they were so busy studying that they couldn't go to bed until midnight. At the same time, I was also full of expectation. Writing this report, I would like to look back on what I learned at KCC.

2. English Language Teaching Workshop

First of all, we checked a list of terms related to current trends in language instruction. I didn't know about one third of them. Prof. Malm told us that we would be able to explain all of the terms at the end of this program. Instead of explaining the terms explicitly, she taught us those terms through Content-based Instruction.

In this workshop, we learned about Sustained-Content Language Learning (SCLL) and Content-based Instruction (CBI). Prof. Malm showed us a power point presentation and taught us about the history of language acquisition theories and language teaching methodologies in ESL/EFL. I knew most of the methodologies until communicative approach, as I had learned about them at university. However, as for rather new methodologies such as Task-based, Problem-based, or Content-based Integrated Skills Approach, I had read about but not really learned about them. Language skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking are effectively integrated in most of the new methodologies. Through CBI, learners talk about and learn about the content in English. In other words, students learn English through learning content. In this way, they will use English with real purposes and also improve their critical thinking by learning and thinking about content. I found this method very interesting and useful.

After the presentation, we brainstormed the ways to apply CBI to our classes. First, we talked about our students' interests in order to decide what kind of content we should choose, then we talked about some activities to improve students' four language skills, grammatical competence and critical thinking. Finally we discussed what reactions we would get from our students. I learned from this session that the more meaningful the activities are, the more engaged in learning students become. I also learned that to

make CBI successful, teachers should prepare activities well and keep a balance between learning about content and learning language.

We also talked about what interaction was. We brainstormed what interaction was. Prof. Malm told us that interaction is a process by which two or more things affect each other. We discussed some examples of interaction and how to make activities more interactive. I realized that even when we teach grammar or pronunciation, we can make activities more interactive.

3. Advanced Language Development Seminar

3.1 Reading

We read a lot of articles about ESL/EFL every day. Prof. Malm told us that we didn't have to understand every word or every sentence, and that it was OK if we could understand the content or main theme. She advised us to circle the words we didn't know and underline what we thought was important, so that we could read without using dictionary and understand content effectively. After reading, we were supposed to share our thoughts about what we read, so I was able to read the text trying to organize my idea about content. If learners have a purpose, they will get more engaged in reading. Here, I noticed that the important thing was to give learners a purpose to read.

3.2 Writing

We were asked to free-write in a journal each day. We wrote about what we learned or our problems in teaching English. The next day, we talked about what we wrote and shared our thoughts. In free-writing, it is important to keep writing as much as possible without being afraid of making mistakes. It focuses on fluency rather than accuracy. I used to care too much about correcting errors in students' writing, but through this seminar I learned that it is important to improve fluency first, and then they can improve accuracy. Later, Prof. Malm showed us how to improve accuracy. First, she gave us a topic and some words to use, then we did free-writing. Then she underlined the sentences where we didn't make any mistakes. After that, we corrected the errors by ourselves, or discussed in pairs or groups. We rewrote without looking at the original writing. In this way, learners can notice their own mistakes, and also if they work in pairs or groups, they can discuss and interact with each other to correct errors. Also learners have a chance to write correct sentences.

Prof. Malm also showed us how to do process writing when we wrote our philosophy or research paper. This method is really effective to improve students' writing ability. Prof. Malm also pointed out that most of the Japanese students have not written more than one paragraph. I totally agree with her and I also think students should be given more opportunities to write more.

3.3 Speaking and Listening

Once we had a chance of observing a poster session. The students were from Japan and their level of English was inter-mediate. The topic was "Civil rights in America." They watched several movies and learned about civil rights in America, then they made a power point presentation and practiced the presentation in front of an audience. The objective was to improve their fluency. They made some mistakes but they spoke a

certain amount of English about what they had learned. This would certainly give them confidence. Also through this kind of leaning, we can expect students' transformation after learning about content as well.

Prof. Malm told us that it is important to have the ability to ask questions for communication. When we go abroad, the function we would use most is asking questions. Also, when we don't understand what others said, we should ask questions to understand well. This is real communication. Thus, it is important to teach students how to ask questions appropriately in English. I thought I should give my students more opportunities to ask questions in English.

Prof. Malm also showed us an example of listening activities. We listened to a YouTube video and checked how much we understood the content. Later we checked some vocabulary and some grammar points and then we listened again and checked the understanding of the content again. In this way, learners can actually feel that they have improved their understandings. The interesting point was the way to explain pronunciation. She divided a word into syllables and show each sound by using another word with the same sound. I think this is very effective and students can easily understand the sound.

4. Issues in Education Seminar

We visited State of Hawaii Department of Education and learned about the public education system in Hawaii. Before visiting DOE, Prof. Malm showed us newspaper articles about the new teacher evaluation system. It said that the educational outcome in Hawaii is very low, so DOE is going to introduce the Educator Effectiveness System (EES) from next year in order to produce good education results. This is not just to evaluate teachers but also to give feedback and support their improvement. The criteria of evaluation includes classroom observations, students' surveys, students' growth percentile, and students' learning objectives. I found it interesting that they don't evaluate by test scores but by the growth rate of the scores.

We also learned the history of language and education in Hawaii from Dr. Pagotto. She gave us a very interesting lecture on how education in Hawaii started, how people were segregated by English proficiency and how Pidgin English was created. Even now some people speak Pidgin English in Hawaii and there are even some good books written in Pidgin English. We read a story in Pidgin English and surprisingly I was able to understand the story even though I didn't understand some words or grammar. I thought this was exactly what they were trying to tell us about fluency in reading. Even though grammar and words are not familiar with you, you can understand main points. Also, I found that Pidgin English was similar to my students' English in terms of grammatical errors.

Another interesting point is that because of the old school division system from the plantation time, when people meet someone for the first time in Hawaii, they often ask which high school he or she graduated from. That sounded very strange to me, but I learned that Hawaii is such a small island state, there are very small communities. They still judge people by the school they went. It was a surprising fact to know.

5. Field Trip

We visited Plantation Village and USS Missouri Memorial to learn history and culture in Hawaii. Plantation Village is a kind of outdoor museum, which includes restored buildings and replicas. First, we saw flags of Hawaii, China, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Japan, Okinawa, Korea, and the Philippines. These flags showed the countries which immigrants came from. Also, there were some things which we could see they were trying to keep their cultures, such as a Japanese shrine, a public bath, and a barbershop. The guide who used to live in the village told us about the lives there and how various ethnic groups were cooperating with each other. I became more interested in the history of immigrants and the backgrounds of multicultural communities in Hawaii.

Then we visited the USS Missouri Memorial battleship. I was very impressed to know that Pearl Harbor was the very place where the World War started, and that the battleship was the very place where the representatives of the Empire of Japan signed the Instrument of Surrender to end the World War II. We happened to visit Pearl Harbor on August 6th Japan time. This gave us a good opportunity to think about the importance of peace.

6. Teaching Philosophy

First, we read Prof. Malm's teaching philosophy, which she had submitted to KCC when she applied to the job. It gave us a clear idea of her belief in teaching. Then, we brainstormed some questions about teaching. We did free-writing about those questions, and discussed what we wrote. I chose to write about "Why do I teach?" "What should the relationship between teachers and students be like?" "What is my primary goal I have for my students?" She also showed us an article about teaching philosophy. Reading this article, I realized the importance of writing a teaching philosophy. To be honest, writing a teaching philosophy was the hardest part for me in this program. Before that, my thoughts and feelings about teaching were like a tangled thread, as I was just transferred to a new school and I lost my confidence in teaching. However, writing a teaching philosophy, I was able to reorganize my thoughts and regain a positive feeling about teaching English. Now I know my own objectives clearly. I teach because I want my students to be happy, to realize their dreams, and to find learning English enjoyable. If they can enjoy learning English, they will be able to study more for themselves and be successful in communicating in English in the future. My primary goal is to encourage students to be good citizens who can contribute to an international community. To achieve this goal, I, as an English teacher, can help my students not only improve their English, but also improve their critical thinking, and transform their ways of thinking.

7. Lesson Plan

After writing a teaching philosophy, we started to make a teaching plan. I wanted to make use of what I learned, so I tried to introduce integrated-skill instruction in order to give students as many chances to use English as possible. I used two pictures in a lesson and made an information gap activity, where students would need to interact each other. As a schema activation, students would guess and describe the pictures so that they would want to know more about the pictures. This activity would give students a

purpose of reading. I also tried to give students some opportunities to write their opinions, discuss in groups, and give presentations. Prof. Malm advised me that I could use authentic articles from the Internet as a further activity. Students would get further information about content and they could learn English in the real world. It may be challenging for my students who are not used to this type of activity. Even so, I would like to try it by telling students that if they don't use English for real communication, they cannot communicate in English in the real world.

8. Research paper and Presentation

My research theme was "Effective Integration of Language Skills Based on a Content Theme in Japanese High School EFL Classrooms." I wanted to make use of what I learned at KCC, so I focused on practical activities I could bring into my classrooms. Moreover, I was very attracted to integrated-skills instruction because it focuses on not only fluency, but also accuracy. In this approach, four skills are integrated so it seems to be a more natural way of learning languages. Students can also get a lot of input and many chances to do output. However, in the situation of EFL in Japan, we must use a textbook. Teachers need to make a new style of integrated-skill instruction, which is suitable for a Japanese context by combining content-based instruction and Japanese textbook content. The biggest challenge for me now is to find the best way to introduce what I have learned in KCC to my high school English classroom in Japan. I realized that I need to be more flexible, and make use of more authentic materials to supplement content in the textbook.

In the research paper, I mentioned the background of Japanese English education first, and then the reason why I got interested in Integrated-skills instruction. After that, I introduced some activities which I thought I could use in my classes. Finally, I wrote about appropriate scaffolding and possible problems. I discussed the content with Prof. Malm and rewrote my report many times. I was able to experience "Process Writing" through this research paper.

After writing my research paper, I made a power point to give a presentation. Prof. Malm advised us that we should put only important key words on the power point. When I practiced my presentation, she gave me some positive feedback and useful advice. On the day of the presentation, about ten people, including two teachers from DOE and some professors and students at KCC, came to our presentations. I was very nervous but as we practiced the day before, I think I was able to give a better presentation. The audience was very supportive. They sometimes nodded or took notes. They showed some interest in my presentation and that made me feel comfortable and confident. I learned from this experience that students also have the same kind of stress when they have to do a presentation in front of the class. Now that I can understand their feelings, I will give them more positive feedback so that they will be able to feel confident.

9. Conclusion

This was my first visit to Hawaii, so I hadn't been able to imagine what my stay in Hawaii would be like. Although sometimes things didn't go smoothly, all in all I had a great time and I was able to achieve my objectives I had set before visiting Hawaii. Through this program, we improved our English by listening, reading, writing and

speaking a lot while learning about CBI. It was a very interesting experience to be a student again. It was hard because we had to study until midnight every day, but also it was very enjoyable to learn something new. Moreover, I realized that teachers should be learners and innovators as well. It may not be easy to change our ways of teaching, but we can start by learning effective ways and trying new activities one by one. I think teachers must keep striving to find better ways to develop students' English ability. From now on, I am going to strive to give back what I learned at KCC to my students.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Hiroshima Board of Education, professors and coordinators at KCC, the two other teachers who joined this program with me, and many people who worked hard for us to achieve this program.