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Reporting on Training

This summer I've learned a lot through the Teachers' Summer Seminar 2007 at Kapi'olani' Community College, Hawaii. Before leaving Japan, I spent a few days in anticipation and some trepidation. However, when I finished the program and received a certificate of completion, I was overwhelmed with gratitude.



1 Summer Seminar at Kapi'olani' Community College

1) Program

There were a lot of programs for us and the curriculum focused on Content-based and Communicative Teaching in the EFL Situation, as follows:

English Language Teaching Workshop:

Content-based Language Teaching / Phonetics & Phonology / Encouraging Student-to-Student Interaction in the Content-based Class / Techniques of Teaching Reading in the Content-based Class / Content-based and Communicative Teaching in the EFL Situation / The Content-Based Approach to Developing Oral Skills / Integrating Language Skills in the Content Based Class / Pronunciation and Semantics in the Content-based Class

The teachers at KCC support the students in striving to attain their dreams through English and in developing effective English teaching methods. They have an extensive knowledge of teaching and incorporate a case study or fieldwork into every lesson. For us, they brainstormed some creative ideas for reading, speaking, writing and listening. We tried some activities in the classes. I wrote a teaching plan and did a trial lesson in front of the teachers. Then I obtained comments from them. In doing so I learned a lot. The KCC teachers always provided me with opportunities for an exchange of views. We took classes not only as English teachers but also as students. We were exposed to English extensively for a very long period of time. I tried to express myself in English and ask as many questions as possible. They have a mixed bag of teaching ideas. I was able to learn about many styles of teaching English in the classroom.

2) Research Papers and Presentation

I've focused on the style of lesson using skits for a long time, so my topic of research at KCC was "Do skits effectively improve students' practical communicative English skills?" I think the use of skits is be a useful strategy for helping students to extend conversation, develop self-expression, and improve or step-up speaking skills (including, but not limited to, intonation, rhythm and sentence stress, linking, consonants and vowels). It might also be effective to improve students' practical communicative English skills if they can create their own skits or vary their responses to communicate their own ideas. I wrote a Research Paper about this topic. Sometimes it did not progress as much as I hoped and I had a hard time with it. However, I was encouraged by the teachers when I faced difficulties. At the end of KCC program, I made a presentation. I got too nervous when my turn came. After the presentation, I had the opportunity to share ideas on the topic with the teachers. This opportunity made the presentation a positive experience.

3) Journal

After the classes, I completed several assignments. One of them was writing journals every day. The teacher gave us some topics as follows:

- Are students in Japan today similar to or different from students in your high school days?
- What is the most important thing in your students' lives?
- What is the Japanese students' attitude toward learning English?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of English teaching in Japan?
- What are your goals as an English teacher?

This assignment was effective in improving my English skills. Moreover, I thought that it was necessary for me to look at teaching English from these points of view. It helped me organize my thoughts and make myself clear about the issues of education.

4) Field Trip

We went on field trips to the Board of Education of Hawaii, University of Hawaii Manoa Tour, Plantation Village, and Bishop Museum. The place I remember the most of all is Plantation Village. I saw a lot of articles on display there. On the display in Plantation Village are the belongings of many residents of that time and other important articles. The people of that time utilized wisdom and innovative ideas. People recycled and made the most of the things they had. For example, I found a ukulele made from an old tobacco box. The people of Plantation Village emigrated to Hawaii to acquire productive land to grow crops. There were a lot of productive fruit trees. Some of them were so big that I couldn't get my arms around them. I was overwhelmed by the large and plentiful fields. In Plantation Village the set design precisely reproduces the furniture and style of the time. I saw many kinds of houses and buildings (Japanese-style, Chinese-style, Portuguese-style, Puerto

Rican-style, Korean-style, and Filipino-style houses, temples, shops, etc.). There were certain national characteristics in them. Plantation Village was characterized by its variety. I felt that the people at that time tried to preserve the identity of traditional cultures and showed respect for traditional culture. I was able to see and feel the tie their lives have to their own traditional culture.

2 Homestay

I enjoyed a homestay for three days. My host family members have been engaged in education in Hawaii and have been interested in Japanese culture, so I talked with them about many topics every day. I asked them why they have hosted foreign students for such a long time. They said to me, "We can learn from each other's experiences and cultures through homestay. It will be our pleasure to host you." I was impressed by their words. I benefited from hearing their important ideas. I deeply felt their personal warmth for three days.

Conclusion

I've been both a student and a teacher at KCC for three weeks. I actually realized how important the teacher's words are for the students. A professor said to me in the class, "When you ride a bicycle, you are building a habit... You fall off, and THAT IS NATURAL. But you get back on the bicycle, and you try again... and you get better... and you get better..." Many people like our students will say: 'I can't speak English, or my English isn't perfect.' The idea of 'perfect' really hurts many people... I tell myself and my students: 'Don't focus on "perfect". Focus on "better".' It was one of the most impressive lessons for me. Many students have a strong desire to communicate in English. However, some students are afraid of making mistakes. I can understand their feelings now. I'd like to help the students through this difficult time. The most important thing is to offer them compliments and positive feedback (while also giving them a realistic view of their abilities). If the students have no motivation, they will not study English and not be successful. I think smooth, charming, and great compliments challenge them to make their dreams real. I've been teaching at Fukuyama Junior High School for two years. The students have a strong desire to learn English. They hope to become able to communicate in English and be active in the international community when they enter the world of work. There are three English lessons and Communication class. The aim of the Communication class is to develop the students' practical communication skills. They try various activities, for example, Skit, Debate, Show&Tell and so on. All of these are difficult for students. Sometimes they face unexpected language barriers. However, these lessons become positive experiences when the students achieve a desired target. I have to keep learning how to teach English and brush up my English skills. Today I feel the growing interest of Japanese people in international problems. I will apply my experience in Hawaii to education in Japan. I will teach and share what I learned to our students and many teachers of Fukuyama Junior High School and other schools in Hiroshima. I'd like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to study at KCC and meet many people in Hawaii.