

Kyoko Kodera

Hiroshima Junior High School

Reporting on Training

1. Introduction

This summer I had lots of wonderful experiences at Kapi'olani Community College (KCC) in Hawaii. I had three big purposes when I joined this seminar:

- (1) To find effective materials and ways of teaching
- (2) To make a network between teachers in Japan and the teachers in the United States
- (3) To improve and develop my English abilities

Through this seminar I learned lots of teaching approaches to develop EFL students' English abilities. And I got some hints which I could use in my class. Moreover I got a chance to think of my teaching philosophy. For example, "Why do I teach English? As a teacher, what is the most important thing to do? Why is motivation important for learning? How can I motivate students? What is the goal I have for my students? What is the goal for me as a teacher?" I have never thought of them deeply, so it was a very precious time for me. I faced up to myself and thought deeply about teaching. In this report I would like to look back on my training in KCC.

2. My Teaching Philosophy

I like seeing students' happy smiles and students' progress while teaching. I like sharing feelings with students even if there is a time when I feel sad, angry, and disappointed in them. I believe that teachers should enjoy their class whenever they are in the classroom. Teachers should always make their class a fun and safe place for students to learn. Teachers should never forget to smile and to encourage students. Teachers should make students feel learning is fun. However, teachers should also have a kind of authority that the students respect. As long as we do these things as teachers, our students will trust and follow us! When students feel happy, they are not afraid to try new things and will try to do their best to study even when the task is very difficult for them! Positive feelings promote student motivation. When students are highly engaged in classroom activities and strongly motivated, I believe that they will want to learn more and more.

3. What I learned in KCC

The main instructors were Prof. Malm and Prof. Dudzik. Both of them were very friendly and I had lots of chances to use English and to discuss with them in English. They had three clear goals of this seminar:

- (1) To provide participants with a chance to enhance their English language skills
- (2) To provide participants with an overview of SLS teaching and opportunities to experiment with various strategies for teaching English, including applications from the content-based curriculum model
- (3) To provide participants with an opportunity to explore, discuss and research issues relevant to

EFL teaching.

In order to accomplish these goals, I was given lots of tasks. First, I read and discussed articles relating to the teaching of EFL. Second, I learned some methods for encouraging students' interaction and increasing students' oral proficiency. Third, I learned the process approach to teaching writing. Fourth, I learned the concepts of extensive and intensive and purposeful reading. Fifth, I learned oral methods, including those used in content-based instruction. After I learned them, I designed a lesson plan for my class and made new materials or worksheets used CBI. The most important tasks were making a research paper and a power point for the final presentation. By having these experiences, I could improve my English abilities, especially speaking abilities. And I noticed that clear goals, step-by-step training and teachers' sufficient preparations could promote students' motivations and their English abilities. If teachers want to improve and develop students' English abilities, teachers should continue to make efforts and learn English. As a result, students will notice that learning is meaningful for their future.

4. Impressive activities in KCC

4.1 Concept map

When I observed Prof. Dudzik's class, I learned about "concept map". It looked like a "brainstorming", but "concept map" was different. "Concept map" is a visual map that is connected to some points. It is very useful to make or write our idea clearly. When we learn lots of things, we have lots of information. Then we have to choose which idea is same and which idea is different. When we organize something, we need to think about the connections. If we use this method, we can build up our idea and explain it logically. I think that "concept map" is one of the effective activities when we teach students how to write in English.

4.2 Feedback

I was also impressed of the process of "feedback". There were some types of feedback like teachers-to-students, students-to-students. When teachers gave some comments or advice to the students, they tried to listen and think about them deeply. Then they exchanged their reasons or ideas again and again. Through this activity, they had a chance to improve their English abilities like listening, speaking, thinking skills. And they felt that cooperation was important. I think that "feedback" is also an effective activity to promote students' motivations.

4.3 Challenge and Solution

When I learned 4 skills like "Listening", "Speaking", "Reading" and "Writing", Prof. Malm always asked me about "challenge and solution". She taught me that it was important for teachers to think about what challenges of students were and how to solve them. To make problems clear was important and useful to teach. If teachers want to find the effective teaching method, they need to make their "challenge and solution" clear. If they do that, they will get to the hints to solve the problems.

4.4 Free-writing

I think that “free-writing” is an effective activity to improve students’ writing skills. At Prof. Dudzik’s class, I enjoyed writing freely and making a short story without dictionary. After writing, we exchanged our story and did feedback. It was very fun. The purpose of “free-writing” is to focus on “fluency”. Students don’t have to pay attention to their grammar. They only pay attention to continue to write what they think. Through this activity, students can enjoy writing and motivate themselves.

4.5 Poster Session

I think that poster session is a very effective activity. When I observed Prof. Yamamoto’s class, I was so impressed to see how to make a poster session. Especially I was interested in the process they had. First, they did a brainstorming. Second, they exchanged their own idea. Third, they discussed about it more. When they needed to research, they used a computer and they took notes. Finally, they made a poster and one of them reported it. They played 3 parts in turn. One of them was a leader, the others were a recorder and a reporter. I heard that they were given many opportunities to do this poster session, so gradually they can speak English fluently. When we speak in front of others like poster session, we should think deeply and write our idea first (reading & writing skills are needed). Next we should exchange our idea and in a discussion (listening & speaking skills are needed). I think this activity of poster session follows an integrated-skill approach. And also students can learn how to cooperate with each other and exchange their ideas. This group activity is very meaningful for students to communicate because what they are learning is connected to what they need. In short they can use English in real life. I thought this experience like poster session was needed for my students, too. This process was so new to me, and it gave me a hint.

5. Research Paper

5.1 How to decide the topic

“Increasing Student Motivation and Oral Proficiency Using Integrated-skills Activities”

This is my topic. Here are points when I decided the topic:

(1) Hiroshima Junior High School’s Motto :

“Through the provision of a fully integrated 6 year education and activity programs, we will nurture and develop our students to enable to play a major role on the 21st century global stage.”
If they have confident to speak English, they will be able to express their idea and feelings.

(2) My students’ Challenges:

They don’t have many chances to speak English outside of the class, so they are too shy to speak English in front of others. If they have more chances to speak and use English, they will feel more confident. Especially in Japan, we don’t need to use English so much in our daily life. So they need more vocabulary input and to know the basic grammar. Teachers intentionally need to make more chances to speak English in the real situation.

(3) Poster session:

I think that Poster Session is one of the effective approaches to develop students' speaking abilities.

(4) Motivation for learning:

If we are interested in something, we never want to stop doing it. Moreover we want to continue to do it and we hope to make a progress. Learning is continuing. I think motivation is important for learning.

5.2 Integrated-skills activities

Why is "integrated-skills" needed? According to Longman dictionary, "Integrate" means "to combine two or more things in order to make an effective system". In teaching English, there are 4 important skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). So "integrated-skills" means to combine each skill together. There are many situations where we use more than one language skill. In short, we need more than 2 skills at least when we understand English. So, I think that "integrated-skills" is needed. In addition, "The Course of Study for Foreign Languages" insists to integrate these 4 skills and promote the students' communication abilities. Moreover the standard words will be increased from about 900 to about 1200 in 2012 in junior high school English education. I can easily imagine how hard it will be for both students and teachers. That's why I think teachers should find more interesting and effective approaches for students as fast as possible.

5.3 Integrated-skills activities and motivation

How can integrated-skills activities improve motivation? If teachers can find effective, useful and meaningful ways of teaching, they must be happy. Why? Because it can make students feel that learning is useful and meaningful for them. If students are not good at listening, but are good at reading, in that case, they can understand English through reading. If students are not good at speaking, but are good at writing, they can communicate through writing. In this way 4 skills are connected each other. So teachers should think and make activities that combine each skill together. Only one skill might not help students' understanding, but another skill will help them. I think that integrated-skills activities can improve students' motivation. That's why I think that poster session is one of the effective activities for students.

6. Power Point & Presentation

When I made a power point for presentation, it was hard. I was not good at using a computer, so I needed lots of time to make it. Prof. Malm worried about me, but finally I did it. I learned that "I can do anything if I never give up." When Prof. Malm saw my power point, she was so pleased and said, "You did well". Her words made me happy. This was one of my good experiences in KCC.



7. Outside the classroom

There were lots of materials to improve and develop my English abilities outside the classroom.

7.1 Homestay

From July 29 to July 31, I experienced homestay. During my homestay, I joined two types of home party. One of them was a 1-year-anniversary party. It was a party celebrated for the kid's 1-year-birthday. Many people were invited to the party and celebrated the kid. I heard that it was very common in Hawaii. The other party was a home party. It was called "Potluck Party". Participants brought some food and enjoyed chatting.

7.2 Visiting some historical places

Prof. Malm took me some places. The first place we visited was the Ulupo Heiau in Kailua. It is a sacred place and the second largest heiau on the island of Oahu. We enjoyed seeing the jazz concert and hula and eating Hawaiian food. The second place we visited was Plantation Village. I learned the history of immigrants, plantation life, working conditions and houses. The third place was the Bishop Museum. There were lots of exhibitions of Kamehameha dynasty. There I saw hula and I learned the meaning of it and its spirit. The fourth place we visited was Punch Bowl. It was the National Memorial Cemetery. I thought of "War and Peace". Like people in Hiroshima never forget "August 6", the people in Hawaii never forget "December 8", Pearl Harbor.

7.3 Human Network

In KCC I met some groups who came to learn English. One of them was teachers from Korea. At lunch time I sometimes enjoyed talking with them. Lunch time was a good opportunity to communicate with other people. I could make human network there. During three weeks I noticed that my listening and speaking abilities were getting better.

8. Conclusion

I have taught English for about 20 years in junior high school. Through my teaching career, I have wondered whether my teaching approach is really good or not good because I didn't have any academic bases. But at KCC, I learned many effective activities and approaches that are supported by academic bases. Thus I could have some confidence in my teaching. I was interested in "Content-based", "Task-based", "Brainstorming", "Interaction", "Critical-thinking", "Feedback", "Integrated-skills" and so on. When I teach students "Listening", "Speaking", "Reading" and "Writing", I would like to use them. Through this seminar I re-noticed that to maintain a passion for teaching is important for teachers. Thus I would like to make efforts to find many interesting supplementary materials and activities for students and try to fit them into the English lessons in our textbook. Supplementary materials and activities have to be connected to the students' current language level and they must be made comprehensible. If students are having fun and understand what they are learning, the lesson is successful. If every class is like this, students are more likely to be happy about their English class and to feel confident about learning English. If they feel confident, surely they will want to study more and more. Finally I

would like to express my special thanks to many people who gave me opportunities to think and learn in KCC.